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Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution

Lawrence Lifschultz

Asia Series No. 2

Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution takes the lid off hitherto unknown facts about Bangladesh's turbulent political history since 1974. Its author, a skilled and experienced journalist, tracks down the facts of the overthrow of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding nationalist leader of Bangladesh, and of the execution a year later of Colonel Abu Taher.

Part I tells the moving story of Taher, one of the leading military figures in Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971, and at one time a close colleague of the country's current head-of-state, Major-General Ziaur Rahman (Zia). On 7 November 1975 a general uprising shook Bangladesh and set off a broad mutiny inside the Bangladesh Armed Forces. This is the story of that uprising and its betrayal. Eight months later Abu Taher was secretly tried and executed by his former friend, whose own life Taher had saved on November 7th. Zia and Taher broke over an issue critical for the entire Third World. What would it be? Revolutionary socialism in one of the poorest countries on earth, or a path of capitalist development based on the largesse of the U.S.A. and the plans of the World Bank?

Part II presents the first exhaustive investigation into the overthrow of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who died in the coup of 15 August 1975. Working jointly with Kai Bird, Assistant Editor of *The Nation* (New York), Lifschultz has unearthed a story which reaches back into the clandestine history of more than a decade of South Asian politics. Their careful work shows how a cohesive group of conservative Bengalis, who rose to prominence in the Pakistan period and were swept aside by Mujib after Independence in 1971, finally staged a coup in alliance with a faction of Mujib's own party and reinstated themselves in power. The investigation traces the history of relations between these circles and the United States. It is a complex story reaching from Henry Kissinger's obscure animosities, to covert contacts in the midst of Pakistan's civil war, to a time bomb inside the Mujib regime's own national intelligence organization.

Lawrence Lifschultz's unique sources encompass over 200 interviews conducted in the United States, Europe and Bangladesh, together with U.S. government documents obtained under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act. He also reproduces in a series of remarkable appendices the court record of the secret trial of Colonel Taher; the author's own interview – the first of its kind – with the CIA's Station Chief in Dacca at the time of Mujib's overthrow; a summary of a confidential study by the Washington based Carnegie Endowment on American foreign policy in the midst of Pakistan's civil war; and a careful account of the long-standing relationship between the East Pakistan (Bangladesh) Security Services and the U.S. Office of Public Safety.

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ISBN 0 905762 07 X
Price: £3.50; $7.95

#7701

$1.75

Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution

I. Taher's Last Testament

Lawrence Lifschultz

II. The Murder of Mujib

Lawrence Lifschultz
with the assistance of
Kai Bird

To Paul, Samar Babu, and Derek

Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road,
London N1 9DN

Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution
was first published by Zed Press, 57
Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN in July
1979. Part I originally appeared in an earlier
version in the *Economic and Political
Weekly* (Bombay) in a special number,
August 1977.

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ISBN 0 905762 07 X

Printed by Billing & Sons Ltd., London
Typeset by Donald Typesetting
Designed by Mayblin/Shaw
Cover photo courtesy of Lawrence
Lifschultz and the Far Eastern
Economic Review

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Acknowledgements

I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Ajit Singh of the Faculty of Economics at Cambridge University for the time granted me to write this work apart from my other responsibilities. Also to Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff for their support and friendship during the summer and autumn of 1976.

Kai Bird and I both wish to extend our thanks to Howard Bray and the Fund for Investigative Journalism, Washington D.C., for the modest financial assistance extended to us for the writing of Part Two of this volume. The names of many Bengali and Western friends should also be listed here, but for reasons ranging from personal security to a desire merely to travel in and out of Bangladesh, they cannot be. Each will more than understand the difficulty of mentioning them individually. Our appreciation, however, is by no means diminished.

Finally, books are not produced by authors alone. Their final form is the result of much unnoticed effort by editors and editorial staff. The efforts of Robert Molteno and Miranda Davies of Zed Press, together with Penny Thomson's earlier work on the manuscript, were a fundamental contribution.

Introduction

Just over two centuries ago a contingent of 800 European irregular soldiers faced an army of nearly 50,000 troops from the Nawab of Bengal's standing forces. Not only was there numerical superiority on the Bengali side, but in this instance artillery and technical supremacy were also against the European force. Nevertheless, in 'the most miserable skirmish ever to be called a decisive battle',[1] the Europeans walked off with a victory which would change world history. This was the Battle of Plassey. The date was 23 June 1757.

All sorts of racial, national and historical myths developed out of this event, but the story of the conquest of Bengal was no mystery. In the modern parlance of the Western intelligence community, what happened was a classic 'covert operation' carried through with great clandestine success. There never was a military defeat of the Nawab of Bengal's army. The method of victory was much more simple: the Commander of the Nawab's armed forces had secretly been bought off by the British before either side had ever reached the mango groves around Plassey.

Through an astute and subtle understanding of the political factions within the Bengali leadership and ruling class; by carefully distinguishing the patriotic from the corrupt; and through the unabashed capacity to buy and sell comprador loyalty from those who deal in their own ambitions for power, the small British expeditionary force under Robert Clive secured its military triumph by a neat gamble on a prior political arrangement. From the incident at Plassey onwards, 'the British waged more or less continuous warfare against the Indian people' consolidating their 'power in India and the conquest of other regions, breaking up the old system of self-sufficient and self-perpetuating villages, and supporting an elite whose self-interest would harmonize with British rule.'[2]

Over the next century an entire world order was remade and reshaped under the global expansion of the British Empire. In Bengal a pre-capitalist mode of production was totally transformed. Indigo, jute, tea, opium, private property in land, Zamindari landlordism, land tax, and the right to buy and sell a peasant's property to extract debt from him were all introduced. And, from its staging post in South Asia, the new European based epoch of commerce and modern industry broke open markets throughout Asia with the rumble of war and the 'right' to an open door.

But the opening key to all this was Plassey. It is pertinent to the contents of this book to be reminded of those events. Familiar as they may be to Bengalis who know their history and the tradition of their theatre, other readers may not be so well informed about the tragedy of a very ancient coup d'etat. The modern relevance will already be clear to anyone who has followed the press revelations and legislative investigations of recent years on what happened to Arbenz in Guatemala, Mossadeq in Iran, Lumumba in the Congo, Sihanouk in Cambodia, and Allende in Chile. In a way the story of Siraj-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, was a pacesetter for the history of other societies, and of his own in the future state of Bangladesh.

Siraj-ud-Daulah ascended the throne of the Nawab of Bengal upon the death of his grandfather, Alivardi Khan, who died in April 1756. The old man had warned his grandson that the growing power and arbitrary actions of the merchants of the East India Company were threatening the province's sovereignty and independence. Before he died Alivardi reportedly urged Siraj to take action:

> Keep in view the power the European nations have in the country. Their wars and politics in the Telinga country [southern India] should keep you waking. On the pretence of private contests between their kings they have seized and divided the country of the King [the Mughal] and the goods of his people between them. Think not to weaken all three together [the English, French, and the Dutch]. The power of the English is great . . . reduce them first. The others will give you little trouble when you have reduced them. Suffer them not, my son, to have fortifications or soldiers. If you do, the country is not yours.[3]

On his accession to power Siraj-ud-Daulah immediately instituted measures which would place the privileges of European merchants on an equal footing with other foreign traders such as the Armenians. This meant the withdrawal of the privileges previously granted the English Company which permitted free import-export trade without the payment of taxes. In its own time and place Siraj's new regime was acting not unlike, one might say, the way the government of Mohammed Mossadeq did in Iran in 1951. Nationalist feeling in Iran had focused on the continued ownership of the country's oil by the British owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.[4] Shortly after Mossadeq became Prime Minister the oil industry was nationalized. This act put him in direct conflict with Britain, the United States and their Iranian client, the young Shah. By August 1953 a coalition of internal and external forces organized by Kermit Roosevelt, the C.I.A.'s Bureau Chief for the Middle East, ousted Mossadeq in a tightly organized putsch and opened up the oil bonanza which fed Western industry throughout the third quarter of the 20th Century.[5] What took place in the case of Bengal is an old and familiar story which has found its specific variation in many societies. But the details of what occurred there in 1756-57 should not be lost on those readers who will concern themselves with the events related in the rest of this volume.

In addition to ordering the East India Company merchants to pay commercial duties, the new Nawab directed the English to dismantle military fortifications recently constructed in the Calcutta area. An initial communication was sent to Watts, the English commercial chief, and was followed by a letter to Drake, the English Governor of Calcutta. The Nawab indicated that he viewed the British as a community of merchants who were welcome to reside in Bengal within that context. But, the construction of fortifications was out of the question, and those which had been built were to be immediately demolished. No foreign military bases would be allowed in Bengal. The English Governor of Calcutta procrastinated in his reply and ultimately responded with characteristic diplomatic obscurity, giving no indication whether any action would be taken on demolishing the military fortifications. Following Drake's spurious response the Nawab marched from his capital at Murshidabad on 1 June 1756. By the 16th Siraj and his army had reached Calcutta. Within three days, and after a somewhat pathetic show of resistance, Governor Drake and the town's commercial notables fled by ship. On June 20th Calcutta's Fort William surrendered to the Nawab's forces.

The legacy of this battle was for the ideologues of empire epitomised by the incident of the Black Hole of Calcutta in which over a hundred English prisoners were reported to have lost their lives. The debate over the event, which occurred apparently without the knowledge of the Nawab, has filled volumes of both careful history and colonial propaganda. 'For fifty years little notice was taken of the incident,' writes Spear, 'but it then became convenient material for the compilers of an imperialist hagiology . . . . The emphasis upon the incident grew so great that the Black Hole became, along with Plassey and the Mutiny, one of the three things which "every schoolboy knew" about India.'[6] But, in the end, any recollection of the politics behind what had occurred frequently got lost. The story of the Black Hole became something of an early English 'bloodbath theory', not unlike the one Americans in Vietnam often fell back on 200 years later, to justify whatever came next.

The British withdrew from Calcutta to an outpost at Fulta and began to plot and organize their counter-offensive. It is at this stage one notices the employment of so many of the classic techniques now identified with the business of contemporary intelligence operations. The first tactic was to exploit rivalries and political differences within the Bengali leadership. There were two pretenders to the Nawab's throne – Ghasiti Begam of Dacca and Shaukat Jang of Purnea – both also descendants of Alivardi. The British had made contact with both elements even prior to their defeat at Calcutta in June 1756, and gave their backing to any challenge which could be mounted against the Nawab, stating in a letter to Shaukat Jang their explicit hope that 'he might defeat Siraj-ud-Daulah'. But the new Nawab moved quickly, neutralizing Ghasiti by non-military means and, after defeating the English at Calcutta, he also marched against Shaukat Jang and killed him.

Meanwhile, to the south at the British enclave of Madras, it was decided to dispatch a military expedition to Bengal to confront the Nawab. The armed force was put under the command of the young Robert Clive, who had distinguished himself against the French five years earlier in Madras and who would later become the Governor of Bengal. The British military force arrived at Fulta in December. Between then and June 1757 a series of negotiations and armed incidents occurred between the two sides. Calcutta itself was recaptured by the British without the Nawab committing his main military units.

It was during this interim period between December and June that Clive set up what turned out to be possibly the most important intelligence coup of British imperial history. At the time it seemed quite an ordinary matter. Through their previous links with the royal pretender, Shaukat Jang, by then dead, the English were aware that secret contacts had existed between Shaukat and certain of the most senior generals of the Nawab's Army. It was known that these military men were prepared to betray Siraj-ud-Daulah, if it could be made clear that there was gain and power in it for them should they co-operate with the English. As the Nawab prepared to march against Clive's forces in Calcutta, Clive concluded a secret treaty with the Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's Army, General Mir Jafar. The go-between for the covert pact were two Calcutta financiers, Jagat Seth and Amin Chand, who were each guaranteed a percentage. The secret agreement was finalized on 10 June 1757, a fortnight before the impending battle at Plassey. In a formal document, according to Spear, 'Mir Jafar promised to confirm the Company's privileges, to pay a million pounds as compensation for the loss of Calcutta, and half a million more to its European inhabitants. By private agreement, there were to be large consolations for the Chief Company officers.'[7] In return the English offered their backing for Mir Jafar's ambition to become the next Nawab of Bengal. The outcome of the Battle of Plassey had been carefully pre-arranged two weeks before the armies even saw each other.

On the 22nd of June Clive's force arrived at Plassey to face the assembled might of the Nawab under the command of Mir Jafar. On the morning of 23 June two small columns under two officers, Mir Madan and Mohanlal, were sent forward to destroy Clive. A stray shot killed Mir Madan, but Mohanlal's column continued to advance with Clive's force retreating before it. Then without explanation or any apparent rationality Mohanlal was ordered by his High Command to retreat and pull back his forces. 'This was not a time to retreat,' Mohanlal is reported to have said in astonishment, 'the action was so far advanced, that whatever might happen, would happen now.'[8] The orders were repeated and with disciplined reluctance Mohanlal's units retreated. Elsewhere units linked to Mir Jafar's plan began a frenzied withdrawal throwing the entire front line military force into confused flight. Senior officers under Mir Jafar failed to intervene to restore discipline or direction. Confusion was exactly what the General wanted at this point. 'Mir Jafar, like Stanley at Bosworth,' says Spear, 'looked on from a distance, appearing cautiously the next day to reap the expensive fruits of this circumspect treachery.'[9]

Within five days, on the 28th, Clive installed him as the *puppet* Nawab at Murshidabad. Siraj-ud-Daulah was captured and four days later was executed by Mir Jafar's son. 'Siraj-ud-Daulah was put down; Mir Jafar was put up. And there was nothing indefinite this time,' writes Woodruff.[10] The year long effort by Siraj, the 'feudal nationalist', to rid Bengal of British commercial penetration was finished at the same moment it seemed so easily and completely within his grasp. And, as Spear later put it in poignant understatement, 'A new era had begun.'[11] What followed was the longest and deepest colonial experience in modern history.

Before Clive left Calcutta in a blaze of personal glory three years later, he had pocketed by private agreement with Mir Jafar £234,000 in cash plus a *jagir*, or tax collection estate, comprising the entire area of present-day 24-Pargannas District, worth £30,000 a year in income. Mir Jafar lasted three years as head of a puppet regime at Murshidabad, becoming drunken, petulant, and ultimately an annoyance to his British patrons at Calcutta. In October 1760, like a discarded wine bottle, he was replaced by British forces under Clive's successor and friend, Henry Vansittart. Into his position was moved Mir Kasim, his son-in-law. After another three years, as British commercial trade began to look more and more like a large-scale looting operation, Mir Kasim began to make objections and to affect a stance of nationalist politics. In what by then had become a roulette of power, Kasim was removed and Mir Jafar, as opportunist as ever, was reinstated in 1763. Jafar, Clive's 'hero' at Plassey, finally died two years later.

Why this old story of corruption and betrayal is worth recounting today is not simply because of the significance it continues to have in the national consciousness of Bengal, where General Mir Jafar's name lingers on like an epic legend; but rather because the content of this book is an account of modern day treachery and heroism in Bengal. And, in many respects, it bears similarity to past events. The names, the entanglements, the deceptions, the executions are, of course, all different. But the General – Ziaur Rahman – who heads the regime in Dacca today is accused by his enemies of being the Mir Jafar of modern Bangladesh. This may only be a political slogan. Nevertheless, it is one worth studying carefully. And, if Zia is a modern day Mir Jafar, he certainly is not the only one roaming the barracks of power in Bengal today.

This book revolves around two principal events. Part I is an account of the insurrection of 7 November 1975 and the subsequent execution of Colonel Abu Taher. Part II is also an account, but of the coup d'etat which overthrew and killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the President of Bangladesh, on 15 August 1975. Both men were nationalists and each will be remembered for his own distinct contribution in bringing Bangladesh into being as an independent state. Taher was a radical nationalist and a Marxist. Mujib was a bourgeois nationalist and an admirer of social democracy, as practised in the more advanced capitalist states.

The account of Taher's life and his hanging appears first in this volume, although chronologically the insurrection of which he was a leading figure, occurred some months after the coup that killed Mujib. The reason for this ordering bears some relation to the origin of the two manuscripts – that is to the two parts of the volume. *Taher's Last Testament* was written first and derived from my position as a foreign correspondent in Dacca at the time of the secret trial which led to his execution. It was through investigation of the Taher case that I came across new information on the origins of the putsch that had toppled Mujibur Rahman. Through careful questioning of Bangladesh and foreign sources, I slowly realized that the small group of officials, who from behind-the-scenes had pressed and agitated for Abu Taher's execution in July 1976 (the first such in 40 years), had themselves all come into leading positions of power immediately after the putsch that pulled Mujib down. Through a biographical study of a number of these individuals, it emerged that not only were most of them previously top intelligence or internal security officials of the old *Pakistan* regime, but many had also been among those few Bengalis who had collaborated with the Pakistan Army in its bloody crackdown on the Bangladesh nationalist movement in 1971. During the research which followed, the coincidences, surprises and leads to broader links multiplied. The original story of the Mujib coup, which I had reported as South Asia Correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, fell apart. The reports that I and other colleagues filed at the time were, as first reports often are, superficial and thus to a certain degree misleading. Only the most apparent aspects of what had happened were reported and discussed. While certainly care had been taken by those active in the coup to obscure and deflect any focus upon themselves, the foreign and Bengali press in general failed to go back and re-examine the underlying history, facts and implications of what had happened.

In certain respects the reason for this is indicative of much of contemporary journalism, particularly Western reporting in the Third World, where the direction over the last decade or more has been towards 'fire brigade' style reporting and spot coverage. The old notion of a resident correspondent who 'sank-in-deep', learned the language and history of the people he was reporting on, and attempted to blend day-to-day political details into a sense of trend and perspective, has suffered a steep decline and is fast becoming an anachronism. Moreover, as a colleague from *The New York Times* once explained to me, the goal is to write '750 words which an intelligent 16 year old will understand on a Monday morning.' To go into depth or into a more extended analysis, particularly in much of the American daily press, is to overdo it. There is a distinct lack of what a former *Review* colleague of mine, Harvey Stockwin, once termed 'scholar journalism'. Although this may be too elevated a term for getting beneath the surface of events, this is what is needed. And too few writers go back to those reports they once put on page one, only to discover years later the story was indeed a very different one.

In some measure these criticisms also apply to sections of the press in Bangladesh. Of course, censorship or implicit threats of retaliation has been the dominant milieu in Dacca for some years now. Nevertheless, unlike India during the Emergency or even Pakistan under Zia-ul Huq's martial law censorship, the response from editors and writers has so far been rather subdued and very little critical examination of the past few years has appeared.

A year after Abu Taher was executed, a meeting was organized at Conway

Hall in London by a group of relatives and some of Taher's former colleagues. I was asked to speak at the meeting and certain of the remarks I made then I believe still have bearing in the current situation:

> When the Taher Memorial Committee asked me to speak at this function I was initially uncertain whether I ought to. I have been a journalist in South Asia whose job has been to record developments and not to lead a debate on the virtues of the various protagonists contending over the great issues that divide classes and political parties in the subcontinent. I have tried to keep my objectives confined simply within the bounds of being a reporter: to record, analyse, and inform people of developments as they happened in the way I understood them.
>
> Editors are always reminding their correspondents about a singular quality – objectivity. To be 'objective' is the by-word of the profession. It is something many of us have given a great deal of thought to. In considering it, I have come up with a distinction that I believe relevant to the case of Abu Taher. For a reporter there can be no compromise with the principle of objectivity. But, on some matters, there also can be no neutrality. One example: In 1975 the Government of India imposed strict censorship on its domestic press and sought to impose such restrictions on foreign correspondents reporting the crisis known as the 'Emergency'. As a journalist then in Delhi, I tried objectively to describe the structure of censorship then being erected, and reported the arrests of Indian journalists who failed to fall into line. As straightforwardly as I could, I described in my reports the new regulations and mechanisms by which they would operate. But, as regards my own views, I was not neutral as far as censorship was concerned. I could report it objectively – that is describe it, giving an account of how it worked, who worked it, and who its victims were. But there was no neutrality as regards my view of censorship. To me it was repugnant, as were the bulldozing of bustees, the arrests of beggars, the forced sterilization of seven million, the mass arrests and the attendant tortures, all in the name of *'Garibi Hatao'* [Abolish Poverty].
>
> So I make a distinction, which some may find hard to see, between objectivity and neutrality. There can be no compromise or qualification on objectivity, as there can be no compromise with the pursuit of accuracy, but I also recognize there is no neutrality on certain questions. That is why I have accepted the Taher Memorial Committee's invitation to speak. Because, when it comes to a question of secret trials and secret executions, I am not neutral. I condemn them whether they be Franco's, or Stalin's, or Ziaur Rahman's. And a year ago, by a coincidence of timing, I happened to arrive in Bangladesh as just such a case was about to begin, full of its own dimensions of death, betrayal and tragic injustice . . . .
>
> I would like to say two things more. I am an American by nationality, and in America we too have had in our history famous incidents of exceptional judicial debasement, where the institutions of law haye been used to commit crimes 'for reasons of state'. In America the names and memory of the executions of the Rosenbergs, of Joe Hill, and of Sacco and Vanzetti stand out most starkly.
>
> Today I am reminded most clearly of Bartholomew Sacco and Giuseppi Vanzetti, two poor Italian immigrants who came to America for a better

life and instead found a frame-up. They were killed because we in America also have our Salauddin Ahmeds and our Safdars. In the time of Sacco and Vanzetti they were called Attorney-General Palmer and J. Edgar Hoover. Today I mention Sacco and Vanzetti because last month – 50 years after their execution – Governor Michael Dukakis of the State of Massachusetts declared that in the official view of the state, Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent men and were wrongly executed. Governor Dukakis has declared that each year, on the anniversary of their execution, the people of the State of Massachusetts where these two men were electrocuted, will observe 'Sacco and Vanzetti Memorial Day'. I doubt whether it will take the people of Bangladesh so long to set right what happened on the gallows of Dacca Central Jail a year ago.

I have one more thing to say before I close. If I may I would like to quote from an essay Paul Baran wrote in 1961. Baran was an American economist whose book *The Political Economy of Growth* still stands as a seminal work on the analysis of underdevelopment in the Third World. What I would like to read of Baran's is not from his economic writings, but from an essay entitled 'The Commitment of the Intellectual'. I hope a number of students, journalists, and lawyers among others in Bangladesh will find his comments pertinent.

Baran says in his essay, *'The writings of C.P. Snow leave no doubt that he believes the commitment of the intellectual to be essentially reducible to the obligation to seek the truth . . . . And yet, while this injunction goes a long way toward formulating the basic commitment of the intellectual, it falls short of taking care of the entire problem. For the problem is not merely whether truth is being told but also what constitutes truth in any given case as well as about what it is being told and about what it is being withheld . . . . Thus, in this domain of state power, what constitutes truth is frequently sought and said about things that do not matter, with the insistence on the pursuit and pronouncement of that kind of truth becoming a powerful ideological weapon of the status quo. On the other hand, telling the truth about what does matter, seeking the truth about the whole, and uncovering the social and historical causes and interconnections of the different parts of the whole is often punished by professional discrimination, social ostracism, and outright intimidation . . . . The desire to tell the truth is therefore only one condition for being an intellectual. The other is courage, readiness to carry on rational inquiry to wherever it may lead, to undertake "ruthless criticism of everything that exists, ruthless in the sense that the criticism will not shrink from its own conclusions or from conflict with the powers that be." An intellectual is thus in essence a social critic, a person whose concern is to identify, to analyze, and in this way to help overcome the obstacles barring the way to the attainment of a better, more humane, and more rational social order . . . as such he is inevitably considered a "troublemaker" and a "nuisance" by the ruling class seeking to preserve the status quo as well as by the intellect workers in its service who accuse the intellectual of being utopian or metaphysical at best, subversive or seditious at worst . . . . Under such conditions it becomes a matter of supreme importance and urgency to insist on the function and to stress the*

> *commitment of the intellectual. For it is under such conditions that it falls to his lot, both as a responsibility and as a privilege, to save from extinction the tradition of humanism, reason, and progress that constitutes our most valuable inheritance from the entire history of mankind."*[12]. . .

Finally, may I paraphrase Baran in saying all that can be hoped for now is that Bangladesh too will produce its 'quota' of men and women who will defend these principles and ultimately will succeed in presenting to the Bengali people the true story of Taher's life and legacy.

Lawrence Lifschultz
Cambridge
1 May 1979

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Part I:
Taher's Last Testament

During the spring of 1908 a legend took root in Eastern India around the life of a young Bengali named Khudiram Bose. In May of that year he was arrested and put on trial, charged with an attempt upon the life of D.H. Kingsford, a British magistrate, who had earned an exceptional reputation for the forms of punishment he passed on members of the underground nationalist movement. It was Kingsford's habit to sentence participants in India's early independence struggle to public whippings.

The attack on the British magistrate failed. Khudiram and his associates were arrested. There followed a lengthy trial known as the Alipore Conspiracy Case which ended in a verdict of death. When Khudiram and Kanailal Datta were hanged, the city of Calcutta was overwhelmed by the funeral procession. The vast and spontaneous character of the outpouring unnerved the local colonial authorities and a ban was imposed on any further public funerals of revolutionaries. In the years which followed both the Public Prosecutor and the Deputy Superintendent of Police who supervised the trial were shot dead by nationalists. The British regarded this period as the opening phase of what their historians would term the 'terrorist movement'. However, to the colonized peasantry and intellectuals of the subcontinent, it was simply the first sign of militant nationalism.

In the villages of Bengal, Khudiram became something of a legend. Minstrels sang of his bravery against the British and legend said he would be reborn each day in a hundred men until independence. In this flow of music and history, in a country where poetry and song have a quality of motion all their own, the story of Khudiram's act and trial spread across Bengal faster than each year's floods and penetrated deeper than any newspaper account ever could. The myth arose that he still moved in a journey through towns and villages speaking for the nationalist cause. 'If you fail to recognize me,' his voice called from a popular folksong, 'Look for the sign of hanging around my neck.'

It was another twenty-six years before the British repeated a political execution in the volatile atmosphere of Bengal. In 1934, Surja Sen, the organizer of the famous Chittagong Armoury Raid, was sentenced and hanged. In the years that followed there was never another political execution in Bengal.

This hardly means there were not countless political murders and massacres. The eastern subcontinent is one of the poorest areas of the world. Each day there arise battles between those who own land and those who must work it. For the peasantry life is a knife edge. A knife edge on which questions of food, land and water are constantly answered by cycles of revolt and suppression. Every day in the subcontinent men die over these issues trying to determine who will command whom. And in a rural economy where commodity production is largely a matter of food, this issue always returns to the ownership of land and the power of the state to preserve the existing arrangement.

Throughout this period of history, as state power moved from the British into the hands of bourgeois nationalist regimes in India and Pakistan, and then in 1971 onto Bangladesh, at least in Bengal no prisoner was ever officially executed for being a revolutionary. Thousands rotted in prison then, as they do today. But the stigma of the death sentence passed by an official court still smelled colonial, and the memory of Khudiram and Surja Sen tempered the gallows instincts of the new authorities.

With state executions of Marxists almost a macabre routine from Iran to Argentina, this apparent restraint in the Indian subcontinent's political and judicial culture may appear anomalous, merely a detail out of the ordinary, and not worthy of special mention. However without focusing upon it there would be no way to express the revulsion felt by so many Bengalis when Colonel Abu Taher was hanged inside Dacca Central Jail on July 21st 1976.

The Letter from Cell No. 8

The story of Abu Taher's life cannot be summed up easily or simply, nor can the sequence of events which brought it to an abrupt heroic close. The time involved spans more than half a decade. It has been a complex period of extraordinary violence and brutality. Since 1975 Bangladesh has been ruled by a succession of four regimes, each succeeding the other by force of arms. Out of the struggle for independence in 1971 nearly a million persons died in war or from starvation. In 1974 the lives of a hundred thousand peasants succumbed to a famine which was largely man-made. In 1975 Bangladesh entered a new phase of political upheavals. Two military putsches involving assassinations and grim jail house murders were followed by a revolutionary army mutiny. It was a soldiers' uprising the likes of which had not been seen in the subcontinent since 1857, when the colonial army of India rebelled against the British. It was this insurrection on November 7th 1975 which deeply shook Bangladesh and more than any other event brought historic prominence to Abu Taher.

Three days before he was hanged, Taher wrote a final letter from prison. It shall be our starting point.

Dacca Central Jail
18th July 1976

Respected Father, Mother, my dearest Lutfa, Bhaijan, my brothers and sisters.

Yesterday afternoon the tribunal announced its verdict against us. I have been sentenced to death. Bhaijan and Major Jalil were sentenced to life imprisonment. All their property will be confiscated. Anwar, Inu, Rab, and Major Zia were given ten years rigorous imprisonment and a penalty each of ten thousand takas. Saleha and Rabiul have been given five years rigorous imprisonment and fines of five thousand takas each. Thirteen others including Dr. Akhlaqur, Mahmood the journalist, and Manna have been set free. At the very last moment the tribunal proclaimed my death sentence; and in great haste they left the court like dogs in flight.

Mahmood suddenly broke into tears. When I tried to comfort him he said, 'I am crying because a Bengali could have the audacity to pass a sentence on Colonel Taher.' Meanwhile, Saleha withdrew to the restroom and broke down in tears. When I called to her saying, 'I don't ever expect such weakness from you,' she said, 'These are not tears. This is laughter.' What a wonderful vision of laughter are the tears of this sister of mine. I met her first here in the prison's courtroom. I have such admiration for her. What nation can produce a sister like her?

Among those convicted there was only a single lament: why had they not also been sentenced to death? Suddenly there were cries from all quarters of the jail house. Defiant and ever louder: 'Taher Bhai! Red Salute! Lal Salam!' Can these high walls hold back this cry? Will not the echoes of this call reach into the hearts of the people of my country?

Our lawyers were stunned at the announcement of the verdict. They came and told me that, although there is no appeal from this tribunal, they would issue a writ to the Supreme Court. The entire workings and procedure of the tribunal had been unconstitutional and illegal. They said that simultaneously they would issue an appeal to the President. Then I made it clear to them that no such appeal was to be issued. We had installed this President and I would not petition for my life from these traitors.

Everyone wanted to hear me speak a few words. Meanwhile, the prison authorities were becoming eager to separate us. I said, 'When I am alone, fear and selfish desire for life attack me from all sides. But when I am with you, all fear and selfishness leave me. I become brave and I can see myself with all the strength and courage of the revolution. An invincible calmness determined to overcome all obstacles enters into me. We want to sacrifice the isolation of our separate existences and find our true expression among the people – that is what our struggle is for.'

They are all leaving, bidding goodbye one by one. Their eyes wet. We have spent quite a while together. Who knows when we shall meet again? Saleha will go with me. Bhaijan and Anwar show me a stoic calmness. But I know them. This is an act for my benefit. Belal's eyes are strangely luminous – it is as if they are on the verge of breaking into tears. Jalil, Rab, and Zia firmly embrace me. It is a bond that binds us to the entire nation. A bond which no one can break.

They have left. All of them. Saleha and I come out together. She goes to her cell. As I pass, prisoners and political detainees peer out with eager eyes from behind the doors and windows of their locked cells. Matin Sahib, Tipu Biswas and the others raise their hands in the sign of victory. This trial has united the revolutionaries almost without their knowledge.

I was taken to Cell Number 8. It is the cell assigned to prisoners who are to be hanged. In the cells adjacent to mine there are three other victims for the gallows. It is a small cell. Quite clean. It is all right.

When standing face to face with death, I turn to look back on my life and find nothing to be ashamed of. I see many events which unite me irrevocably to our people. Can I have a greater joy or happiness than this?

Nitu, Jishu, and Mishu . . . everyone comes crowding into my memory. I have not left behind any wealth or property for them, but our entire nation is there for their future. We have seen thousands of naked children deprived of love and affection. We wanted a home for them. Is this dawn too distant for the Bengali people? No, it is not too far off. The sun is about to rise.

I have given my blood for the creation of this country. And now I shall give my life. Let this illuminate and infuse new strength into the souls of our people. What greater reward could there be for me?

No one can kill me. I live in the midst of the masses. My pulse beats in their pulse. If I am to be killed, the entire people must also be killed. What force can do that? None.

This morning's paper just came in. They have published the news of my death sentence and the sentences of the rest on the front page. The description of the proceedings that has been published is entirely false. It has been alleged during the trial and on the evidence of state witnesses that the Sepoy Revolution of the 7th November occurred under my leadership. This I do not deny. Yet, the papers do not mention this nor that it was under my orders that Ziaur Rahman was released. It was we who installed the present government in its place of authority, only to be betrayed. During the entire trial there was no reference whatsoever of the Kader Bahini.

It is my ardent hope that our lawyers Ataur Rahman, Zulmat Ali, and all others who were present will expose the secret behind this trial and protest its false propaganda. I do not fear death. Zia is a traitor and a conspirator and has had to take refuge in lies to discredit me before the people. Tell Ataur Rahman and the others that it is their moral responsibility to expose the truth – and if they fail in this duty, history will not forgive them.

My greatest respect, my love, and my everlasting affection be with you all.

Taher

The purpose of this book is to describe the history of the events which gave birth to the November 7th Uprising.[1] But more than that the object is to reveal the details of Taher's secret trial and subsequent execution. The men whom he calls upon to realize their moral responsibility or face the condemnation of history, would today face arrest in Bangladesh were they to publicly speak what they know. No doubt one day they will, but until then the report of this correspondent, and the publication of Taher's own testimony must suffice as an opening statement on the case. The years ahead will certainly provide many more.

Prelude to Insurrection

On November 7th 1975, a revolutionary insurrection exploded in Bangladesh. The uprising was unexpected by the major foreign powers – the United States, India and the Soviet Union – which since Bangladesh's emergence as an independent state have contended for a position of dominance in this remote but strategic corner of South Asia. The November 7th events followed two military coup d'etats (August 15 and November 3) which had badly shaken the unity of the country's ruling elite. On August 15th 1975 the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding nationalist leader of Bangladesh, was brought down by an early morning military putsch led by six junior officers and the thousand troops under their command. Although many details of this event are still obscure and remain to be unearthed, we show in Part Two that the political organizers of the August coup were the circle within Mujib's own ruling Awami League which for years had been considered a pro-American faction.

The principal and identifiable figures among this group on the morning of the August putsch were Mabub Alam Chashi, a former Pakistan foreign service officer; Taheruddin Thakur, Mujib's Information Minister; and Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed, the Commerce Minister in Mujib's administration. The full extent of direct foreign involvement – if any – in the planning of the August coup is yet to be established. But serious allegations have been made claiming prior knowledge and considerable involvement by the United States and Pakistan, together with elements within the administrative, police and intelligence apparatus of Bangladesh, who had remained unreconstructed sympathizers of the old unity of Pakistan. Immediately after the coup many of these individuals surfaced in prominent administrative positions.

Mujib, his nephew Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, a brother-in-law Abdul Rab Serniabat and nearly every member of their families were gunned down on that August morning. The reaction in Bangladesh, although one of extraordinary shock, was not one of a vast popular fury against the coup makers. To a certain degree there prevailed a general mood of deliverance from a regime which had become nepotistic, corrupt and oppressive. Further on, more will be noted about the reasons and forces behind Mujib's political decline, but it may simply be said that Mujibur Rahman, who had returned from imprisonment in Pakistan in 1972 as an unparalleled national hero to his people, within three years died almost without a whimper of support.

Between August and November, 1975, an uneasy period of stalemate and tension set in. Formally, the Commerce Minister Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed took over as acting President. A man highly sympathetic to the United States, Mustaque had been Foreign Minister during the days of Bangladesh's provisional government in 1971. Together with his Foreign Secretary, Mabub Alam Chashi, Mustaque had allegedly been the contact point for secret negotiations with the U.S. State Department in late 1971 on American proposals for a settlement of the 'East Pakistan crisis'. After the coup which toppled Mujib, the new president, together with the six majors, their tanks and the artillery which had brought him to power, ensconced himself behind the walls of the Presidential Palace. Mustaque promised national elections within eighteen months and a lifting of the ban on open political activities which Mujib had imposed. He made no concession, however, on demands for the release of an estimated 62,000 political prisoners. But the real issue was now apparent. It was a situation where vying factions among Bangladesh's ruling class, each with their own distinct international alignment, were engaged in a struggle for control of Bangladesh. And most crucially, since the civilian veneer of power had been blown away on the night of August 15th, this struggle now engaged the upper echelons of the military officer corps.

A number of senior officers, including the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ziaur Rahman (hereafter referred to as 'Zia'), had apparently been approached to join the coup against Mujib, but had held back from active involvement in case it failed. Zia, who would soon emerge as a powerful figure, however, did nothing to expose the August conspiracy. But following its success severe tensions began to build up rapidly inside the armed forces. While the three chiefs of staff under Mujib had, following the August coup, been quickly sent abroad as ambassadors, the junior officers who had pulled off the putsch now began behaving like generals. In the meantime Zaiur Rahman took over as the new Army Chief of Staff and into the position of Chief of General Staff moved Brigadier Khaled Musharraf.

Within Bangladesh's military high command a sharp debate now began concerning the fate of the junior officers who had killed Mujib. The troops involved in the August coup had been ordered by senior officers to return to their barracks. They had refused, fearing they would be disarmed. Khaled Musharraf argued among his officer colleagues that two armies could not exist in one country. Either the chain of military command existed or it did not. And if six junior officers and their troops now refused to return to their barracks, they would have to be dealt with as insubordinates. However, Major-General Zia, head of the Army, refused to support any military action against the August coup makers.

Thus, barely three months later, on November 3rd 1975, the second coup d'etat occurred. This time the rebellion was led by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf with the support of the Dacca Brigade under the command of Colonel Shafat Jamil. Their forces moved in the early hours of November 3rd and seized all major strategic positions in the capital except the Presidential Palace. The Army Chief of Staff, Major-General Zia, was arrested and forced to resign his command. Khaled Musharraf immediately appointed himself to the position of Major-General and declared himself Army Chief of Staff. Throughout that day fear spread that a civil war might break out between contending factions in the armed forces. The artillery and tank units of the Bengal

Lancers, supporting the majors who had killed Mujib in August, threatened to fight a last ditch stand from the Presidential Palace.

A stand-off began and negotiations between the two sides finally took place. Through the intervention of intermediaries it was arranged that the officers who had engineered the August putsch against Mujib would be allowed safe passage into exile. That evening they were to leave on a special flight to Bangkok. But moments before their departure, men, who were allegedly under their command, entered Dacca Central Jail and in a grim instant executed by bayonet four senior ministers of Mujib's cabinet. They were killed in their jail cells. The four men – Tajuddin Ahmed, A.M.S. Kamaruzzaman, Manzoor Ali and Syed Nazrul Islam – would have constituted the leadership of any pro-Mujibist restoration that might perhaps have followed a successful Musharraf coup.

But the most revealing element of Brigadier Musharraf's November 3rd putsch was the exuberant reaction of India. Before news of the jail house murders became public on November 5th, the official Indian radio and strictly censored press greeted this second putsch with such unrestrained pleasure that few observers failed to suspect India's covert hand. The 'official' Indian press campaign of well-informed leaks seemed too well organized to have been spontaneous. On November 4th Khaled Musharraf's mother and brother led a memorial procession from Dacca University to the residence of the late Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It had been organized by the two pro-Moscow parties in Bangladesh, the National Awami Party (Muzzafar) and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Moni). This was the first public expression of sympathy for Mujib since his killing. It was a small procession and drew no crowds. In Dacca itself rumours began circulating that India's covert intelligence organization RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) had engineered the putsch in co-ordination with Khaled Musharraf. Khaled's own supporters in the Army insisted that there had been no Indian backing whatsoever, and that the coup had occurred over issues internal to the Army itself. As with the earlier August events where the United States and Pakistan are alleged to have played a significant role, the extent – if any – of Indian and perhaps Soviet involvement in the November 3rd events still remains to be established.[2] Nevertheless, within days of having taken power Khaled Musharraf had been dubbed an 'agent of the Indo-Soviet axis'. These rumours spread like wild-fire in a city which was turning into a political tinderbox. Their impact, irrespective of their accuracy, had created an explosive situation.

In the last days of Mujib's regime, following a period of severe famine in 1974, enormous popular resentment had developed towards India and Mujib's political identification with that country. The 1974 period evoked the worst memories of the Great Bengal Famine in 1943 when three million peasants perished.[3] By 1975 the general antagonism towards India and the hostility to Mujib had become virtually indistinguishable. In 1974, a year of severe crisis on the world's commodity markets coincided with the worst floods in twenty years in Bangladesh. The price of rice in some districts rose

1,000% above pre-independence levels. It was a moment when many remembered Mujib's promise that after independence from Pakistan rice would sell at half its cost. Now it was ten times that. Every village, faced with growing starvation, listened to stories of fantastic smuggling and profit-making from the illegal shipment of rice and jute to India. Among the kingpins of the illicit trade was the Prime Minister's own brother. The black market operating across the border was a fact. And India was no longer viewed as the ally which had entered the war to bring Pakistan's massacre to an end, but instead as a new sub-imperialist power that was bleeding Bangladesh white.

When Khaled Musharraf's putsch garnered the stigma of being backed by India, and *All India Radio* cemented these rumours with its jubilant news reports, Khaled found his already narrow political and military base slipping from under him. None of the factions of Bangladesh's ruling elite, engaged as they were in a ruthless struggle against one another, could perceive they were on the verge of a revolutionary insurrection.

The November 7th Uprising

On the night of November 3rd, units loyal to Brigadier Khaled Musharraf took up their positions in preparation for the second putsch of the year. First, they surrounded the residence of the Army Chief of Staff, Major-General Zia. It was 4 a.m. and, as Zia awoke in his quarters, he made an urgent and desperate call to the outskirts of Dacca. The man on the other end was Abu Taher, once a close personal friend and battlefield comrade from the 11th Sector.[4] Zia reportedly appealed to Taher to do something. This time Zia's own life was at risk. The conversation was never completed for the line was cut.

Each night between November 4th and 6th, clandestine meetings of junior officers and sepoys were held under Taher's organizational direction. But Taher and these cadres were functioning under the auspices of the Biplopi Shainik Sangsha (Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization). The organization had existed clandestinely for some time, but only on the morning of November 7th did it make its existence known openly. Jointly operating with the Biplopi Gono Bahini (Revolutionary People's Army), made up mainly of former guerilla fighters from the independence struggle, the sepoys of Dacca Cantonment took the lead in an immediate general revolt against Khaled Musharraf's putsch. Both organizations – the R.S.O. and the P.R.A. – were the official armed branches of the Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (J.S.D./Socialist National Party), one of Bangladesh's more significant Marxist tendencies.

What the J.S.D. and Taher, as the secret military commander of the Biplopi Gono Bahini, were setting into motion on the morning of November 7th involved much more than a simple restoration of the *status quo ante.* At the time of Mujib's overthrow the J.S.D. was already preparing for a general insurrection some months ahead. When Mujib was brought down the J.S.D. applauded his downfall, but condemned his assassination. They argued that assassinations and palace coups fundamentally changed little. After August they encouraged their followers to study Marx's *Class Struggles in France* and, in particular, Engels' introduction which stressed the minority and ruling class character of the military coup.

Since August the country had watched one coup follow another. What the J.S.D. and Taher advocated was something else. Rank and file soldiers, they argued, had been pitted against each other by narrow, competing and ambitious factions among the upper echelons of the officer corps, none of which represented the classs interests of the common soldiers or the oppressed masses of the country. On November 5th, under the authority of the Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization, thousands of leaflets were spread among troops in the military cantonments and among urban workers. They called upon the soldiers to cease being pawns of officers' plots and counterplots and to ready themselves for a general uprising. They issued a set of Twelve Demands as the underlying principles of the insurrection.

There were to be 'two prongs' to the uprising. On the evening of November 6th, at a meeting chaired by Taher which included representatives from every military unit in the capital, final instructions were issued for the first stage of the revolt. Simultaneously orders went out to other cantonments around the country. In the first 'prong' Major-General Zia was to be rescued from detention, and if at all possible, Brigadier Khaled Musharraf and his associates were to be captured alive. The 'second prong' of the mutiny was to be set in motion at the same time. Demonstrations and processions supporting the insurrection were to be organized for the morning of November 7th, and the Twelve Demands of the soldiers were to be made the fundamental issue once Khaled's group had been defeated. Zia's rescue would serve as a symbol of the uprising, while the demands of the sepoys would constitute the principled basis of the revolt. It was this second aspect, in addition to the support of thousands of people who poured into the streets of Dacca to cheer the rebel soldiers, which distinguished the mutiny of November 7th from the narrow conspiracies of August 15th and November 3rd.

The soldiers' Twelve Demands ranged from a call for the establishment of a 'revolutionary army' to the total destruction of the British colonial rules and regulations which still dominated military procedure thirty years after independence from England. The opening declaration of the Twelve Demands read:

> Our revolution is not simply to change one leadership for another. This revolution is for one purpose – the interest of the oppressed classes. For that the entire structure of the armed forces must be changed. For many days we were the Army of the richer class. The rich have used us for their own interests. The events of August 15th are but one example. However, this time we have revolted neither for the cause of the rich nor on their behalf. This time we have revolted alongside the masses of the country. From today onwards the armed forces of the nation shall build themselves as the defender of the country's oppressed classes.[5]

The second demand of the soldiers called for the immediate 'release of all political prisoners'. Other demands set out in the November 7th declaration called for the end of differences and distinctions which separated officers from common soldiers. The declaration demanded a 'classless army' as a fundamental step towards the establishment of a classless society. The recruitment of officers from the country's privileged elite via special schools was also attacked. Instead, the selection of officers from among the ranks of the common soldiers was advocated. Among the existing British rules and regulations which were to be abolished was the so-called batman system which compelled rank-and-file sepoys to serve as household servants to higher officers. A number of economic demands were also put forward including improved wages for soldiers and an end to rent being charged for their accommodation.

Most important of all was the call for the establishment of new organs of military authority and decision making. The declaration provided for the establishment of committees similar to the 'soldier soviets' of the Russian Bolsheviks. Under a section entitled 'The Duties of Revolutionary Soldiers' an appeal was made to every military unit to form 'revolutionary army organizations' which would link up with a 'central revolutionary army organization to be formed for the whole of Dacca Cantonment'. The declaration stated:

> This central organization will decide all policies. General Zia will not take any decision without consulting the general committee. Only after consultation will General Zia be able to take any final decisions. This central body will keep contact with the other cantonments, the bodies of revolutionary students, peasants, workers, and the common masses of the country. We must remember that with this revolutionary army all the progressive revolutionary students, peasants, and workers are linked up.[6]

The emergence of a powerful radical force within an organized military was for South Asia an unprecedented development. Its existence, however, should have come as no surprise. The origins go back to March 1971 when Bengali main force units within Pakistan's Army were abruptly shaken out of the role of conventional soldiers. Officers and men of these units, who for years had upheld the stuffy rituals of British colonial and military traditions, and who had spent years putting down tribal and peasant insurgencies of one sort or another, were themselves suddenly and brutally thrust into the role of becoming insurgents organizing popular guerilla forces in the Bangladesh countryside.

Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971 transformed the ideas of many of these officers and soldiers who, in their common struggle to defeat Pakistan and win independence, came into contact with members of various Marxist groups which proclaimed that their goal was not merely independence but also socialist revolution. In the context of a South Asian landscape which encompassed perhaps the worst poverty of the globe, it was an idea of persuasive appeal. Early on November 7th it was these forces which after years of quiescence erupted into rebellion. The Calcutta weekly, *Frontier*, wrote:

> The Bangladesh Army rose in a generalized insurrection with rank and file jawans defying their officers and calling not only for the overthrow of 'the agent' Khaled Musharraf, but also for the immediate implementation of their own Twelve Demands. They were not simple requests for a cup of tea at noon and a bigger bowl of rice, but constituted a radical expression never before seen in any regular army in South Asia. This was the fruit of a conventional army turned into a guerilla force during 1971 coming ripe after four years of subterranean gestation.[7]

By midnight on November 6th all preparations for the rebellion were complete. Shooting broke out not long after midnight on the 7th. The main fighting was centred in the capital's cantonment area. In Rangpur and Chittagong revolts also began. From Comilla and Jessore troops converged on Dacca in support of the mutiny. Within hours the first 'prong' of the uprising had succeeded. Khaled Musharraf and the group of officers who had taken power on November 3rd were overwhelmed. During a desperate attempt to escape, Khaled and several other officers were killed by mutinous troops just outside the Dacca Cantonment at a spot known as the second capital.

The city of Dacca itself was alive with rebellion. Whereas in August and on November 3rd the streets of the capital had remained completely dead, the day of the mutiny crowds poured into the streets to cheer the soldiers. Sepoys joyously shooting their weapons into the air and shouting slogans – 'The Soldiers and People Have United' – rolled through the capital's streets. The mood was exuberant. The political spirit of the year of independence, that seemed to have died after so much famine, flood and pretentious corruption, once more appeared to be alive.

In the early hours of the 7th, Colonel Taher drove to the Second Field Artillery Headquarters where Zia had been taken by the troops which had rescued him. According to witnesses present at the encounter, the meeting between Taher and Zia was highly emotional. Zia, who was still in his night dress, reportedly embraced Taher as he entered the headquarters. In front of the others he thanked Taher for saving his life. Later, when soldiers draped garlands of flowers around Zia's shoulders, he reportedly removed them and placed them on Taher, saying that this was the man who deserved them.

The relationship between the two men had been a close one over a long period. During the Liberation War they had fought in the same sector and during repeated controversies within the military command they had shared the same standpoint on important strategic issues. In the period following independence, as sharp debates and divisions developed within the command, Zia, as Deputy Chief of Staff, had continued to share and give tacit backing to the positions taken by his two closest lieutenants – Colonel M. Ziauddin and Colonel Abu Taher – the commanders of the Dacca and Comilla Brigades respectively. This support and friendship extended right through the period in which Ziauddin and Taher were forced out of the army by Mujib because of their leftist ideas on military organization.

The intimacy of these two men made it hardly surprising that it was Taher to whom Zia cried out on November 4th in a desperate hope that he might be rescued. Nor could it be said that Zia was naive concerning Taher's socialist views. Certainly what Zia did not imagine was the dimension an uprising promoted by Taher and his compatriots in the J.S.D. would take.

The euphoria of November 7th was not to last. The rebels believed – from everything they knew of his personal history – that, although Zia might not support the revolutionary dimension of the uprising, he would not actively oppose the establishment of soldiers' committees. On the evening of the 7th Zia signed the Twelve Demands and committed himself to their implementation. Whether it was a ruse or momentary conviction remains an open question. But the backing that the rebels gave Zia proved to be their crucial error. They did not expect that Zia would himself become the rallying point of the rightist forces.[8] Lenin had remarked that there could not be a socialist revolution in a country unless half the country's army had become revolutionaries first. While the uprising and its aftermath certainly brought many more into their ranks, the Bangladesh Army on November 7th had clearly not reached the class-conscious stage which Lenin considered the essential condition.

Perhaps only Shakespeare or Thucydides could do justice to the painful drama of betrayal, courage and death which followed the mutiny. Two men – Zia and Taher – who once called each other brothers, would bitterly break that bond over an issue which in essence could be said to divide the entire underdeveloped world. What would it be? Revolutionary socialism in one of the poorest of the world's nations, or a path of capitalist development based on the largesse of the Americans and the plans of the World Bank?

On the 7th and 8th of November the mutiny forged ahead in the country's other military cantonments. Serious confrontations occurred between officers and soldiers. In Dacca and Rangpur forty officers were believed to have been killed by their men. Officers and their families fled the cantonment areas. On the 9th of November a senior military official claimed that less than 35% of the officer cadre remained in control of their commands. The rest had fled. A few of those killed were identified with Khaled Musharrat's November 3rd coup, but others died as a result of confrontations between officers and soldiers who were pressing their Twelve Demands. While many officers had supported the 'first prong' of the uprising which rescued Zia, they fiercely resisted the other demands. Numerous officers at this stage attempted to resume command of their troops and ordered them back to barracks.

Several units in turn told their commanders that officers were no longer in command. Enlisted men were reported to have ripped badges of rank off officers' lapels. Commanders in various brigades and battalions were told they must agree to the demand for the establishment of revolutionary committees in each unit as the new organs of authority.

At this point guns were often pulled by both sides in an attempt to press their positions. As fighting broke out many sepoys and officers were killed. In Comilla the uprising reportedly developed without major loss of life. Officers were isolated and not allowed to resume command, but killings were avoided. Orders had been issued by the Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization that 'reactionary' officers who failed to support the 'revolutionary demands' were to be segregated for eventual demobilization.

While the uprising began in the capital, it spread quickly to the district towns, and from there to certain areas of the countryside. Few reports have focused on the relationship of the rural areas to these events. One which did describe the effect the uprising had in one village, Tarapur, is worthwhile quoting at length:

> Party activity in Tarapur had been sporadic in the last year consisting mainly of occasional visits by local J.S.D. cadres who tried to persuade some of the young men of the village to join the party and fight for socialism. A few of the young men had become very sympathetic and allowed cadres to stay in their houses overnight. However, the majority of the villagers were sceptical of the party's ability to accomplish anything. After having lived through the horrors of the 1971 war and the hardships of the Mujib regime, the villagers were reluctant to trust any political figures although anti-government and anti-rich slogans still struck a responsive chord in their hearts . . . . After the November 7th uprising there was a marked change of atmosphere in Tarapur. The mutiny of the army in the nearest cantonment and the execution of several corrupt police officers were exciting events much discussed in the village. J.S.D. cadres suddenly began to move openly in the area during the daytime, barely concealing their weapons. At first, they called for support for Zia's new regime as long as he met their Twelve Demands, and called a large and open demonstration of all J.S.D. supporters in the area. When they thought that the new Government had moved rightwards, the cadres openly attacked Zia and demanded immediate elections and the release of all political prisoners. But most importantly, the party began to seriously organize the village of Tarapur. Despite the failure of the J.S.D. to seize power, the way the November 7th mutiny had broken Bangladesh politics wide open and had mobilized the more radical elements in the armed forces gave even the staunchest cynics of Tarapur a gleam of hope that things could change.
>
> Several weeks after the uprising, a young J.S.D. cadre arrived in Tarapur brandishing a sawn-off shotgun. All the young men of the village quickly gathered around him, and groups of women huddled in the entrances of their homes, called him over to explain how the gun worked. The mysterious weapon was thus demystified. Later that evening, a meeting was held. Most of the attendants were the young men of the village, although older peasants frequently passed by to lend an ear. The literate young men of the village were given the responsibility of reading some simple Marxist texts and then explaining them to the illiterate among them. Recruitment of members for the B.G.B. [Revolutionary People's Army] was also considered. Most of the young men were afraid to volunteer or reluctant because of the work at home. But they all showed a great

curiosity in the concept of the people's war.

The immediate goal of the J.S.D. in the village seemed to be the organization of a nucleus of supporters who, having been taught the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, would then proceed to organize and educate other villagers in the area. Several of the village young men were sent to attend a large meeting of the J.S.D. cadres of several unions. There they became acquainted with the local leaders of the party. The broader strategy for the area, however, was the elimination of dacoits and corrupt former Awami League members and the assumption of law and order functions by the party. Direct attacks on landlords and the upper strata of rural society were considered premature. However, a number of local leaders were threatened with assassination if they turned over party cadres to the police or in any way obstructed the party's work. Fearing for their life many eagerly agreed to cooperate with the party and some even made contributions in kind – warm shawls for cadres who moved around at night and cigarettes and bidis for meetings.

During the course of a few weeks, two notorious dacoits (bandits) were killed by the party and some smaller thieves received milder punishment. Besides having harassed the local population, the two dacoits had also committed robberies saying that they belonged to the J.S.D. That proved to be a fatal mistake. The villagers' reaction to the party's drive against thieves was extremely positive. Previously, cadres had had a difficult time finding places to sleep and eat: suddenly they were besieged with invitations to stay at people's homes. One old lady confided, 'Now the thieves are going to get it. Just like Mujib got it in the end. The party is going to get them. They came to us last night asking us who had stolen all the rice from Awolmia's house.' People's confidence in the ability of the party to govern the area grew steadily as they witnessed for the first time concrete action being taken against the real anti-social elements. The villagers' long experience of the police and army had been just the opposite. In most cases, the government forces had been in close league with the most corrupt and hated people of the area and whenever a pretext arose, they freely looted the houses of the villagers and made false arrests. In taking over the law and order functions of the area, the J.S.D. demonstrated that their concept of justice differed fundamentally from that of the state.

One of the landlords who lived near Tarapur had formerly been a member of the Awami League and under Mujib had misappropriated large amounts of relief. A few full-time cadres of the union were eager to finish him off because of his past misdeeds. Supporters in the villages were approached for their advice. All of them insisted that his murder would only bring down the forces of government repression on the village and alienate many potential supporters who would see the murder as unnecessary bloodshed. Instead it was decided to approach him and threaten him saying that if he went against the party, he would be killed. Under Mujib a fearless and pompous politico, the landlord now began to say his prayers five times a day and meekly approached party supporters asking them if there wasn't some way he could also join. Seeing the success of this strategy many villagers felt a new strength in their unity and began to look ahead to the future when the poor people of the village would be able to hold public trials of men such as he. Raggedly dressed sharecroppers would discuss among themselves what would finally happen when they could organise retribution against the big landlords.[9]

The November 7th mutiny was both an outcome and a beginning. Like many such upsurges in world history the bottom rose up against the top with a force which threatened the entire social order. Instead of a few small factions of the army or the top political elite being caught in a deadly game of intrigue, whole classes of Bangladesh's society were hurled into the circle of political activity. The uprising, although it faltered, established a new political terrain and all that followed would exist in its light.

The National Question and National Independence

The turmoil in Bangladesh during 1975 was the outcome of a period of long gestation. Most immediately it represented the re-emergence of new forces which traced their origins to 1971 and the Liberation War. But no clear picture of these developments can be gathered outside of a much wider understanding of the history of the Indian subcontinent. In the very broadest view any analysis must encompass the entire period of British imperialism in South Asia, and in particular the way the Empire manipulated the relationship between various nationalities for its own purpose. At independence in 1947 British India was split into India and Pakistan. With the partition there arose, particularly in the case of Pakistan, a deep and contradictory dilemma of national definition. Pakistan's ideological premise – the Islamic state – died in the civil war which brought Bangladesh into existence.

Only a week prior to the outbreak of open war between India and Pakistan over the question of Bangladesh, the British journalist, Neville Maxwell, and China's Premier, Chou En-Lai, reflected upon these issues during a discussion in Peking centred upon China's own stand on the imminent war:

> *Neville Maxwell:* There is another aspect to the situation. On the one hand, the Bangladesh movement now certainly has India's all-out backing; but on the other hand, there is a genuine Bengali nationalist movement in East Pakistan. And Pakistan herself is, in a sense, the product of the British Empire's withdrawal from the subcontinent.
>
> *Chou En-Lai:* It all stems from Britain, particularly the Mountbatten policy. Mountbatten carried out the British Empire's policy 'divide and rule', and left many roots of trouble and planted many time-bombs. It can be said that this is a law of the development of colonialism. When colonialism subjects a region to its rule, it unifies the region in its own interest to facilitate exploitation. When it quits it leaves some roots of trouble to facilitate its remote control.
>
> Imperialism invariable trains a bunch of flunkeys for the control of its colonies. India originally was not a single entity. But the colonial rule of the British Empire fostered the Brahmin upper stratum's idea of building

> up an Indian Empire. Nehru made this his policy . . . .
>
> Once war breaks out it often develops independently of men's subjective will. The turmoil could not be easily stopped . . . . And from then on there would be no tranquility on the subcontinent.[10]

On August 14th, 1947, out of the partition of British India, Pakistan emerged as a separate state. The notion of Pakistan as a distinct state for India's Muslims was formally put forward on the 23rd of March 1940 in the Muslim League's Lahore resolution. This declaration grounded the theory of the Pakistani state in the theocratic concept that two nations existed in the Indian subcontinent – one Hindu and one Muslim – and that the partition of these two peoples was an 'inevitable historical necessity'.

The Indian nationalist movement's neglect of the Islamic minority's fear of Hindu religious domination, and the Muslim bourgeoisie's own developing hope for a state of its own, ultimately combined with Britain's own plans for a partition. The manner of Britian's exit from empire, however, left the subcontinent with a geopolitical legacy that thirty years later is still being violently resolved.

India's northwestern regions, comprising the provinces of Baluchistan, Sindh, Western Punjab, Northwest Frontier and the eastern-most province of East Bengal, were designated the Muslim majority areas and constituted the new state of Pakistan. In the process of this religious partition nearly half a million persons lost their lives in a bloodbath of communal carnage. A total of ten million refugees moved both ways across the new borders, and religious zealots had their fill in one prolonged religious riot.[11]

The new state of Pakistan, like India, was made up of diverse national groupings with their own distinct languages and cultural histories. India's Congress Party, with its commitment to a secular form of parliamentary democracy based on the power of the most developed and experienced bourgeois class in the Third World, did manage, following difficult years of regional and linguistic agitations, to redraw provincial boundaries along the geographic lines that divide the country's main national groupings. While the bourgeois democratic institutions of the Indian state have dismally failed over three decades to prod Indian capitalism into raising the basic standard of living for the vast majority of India's population, these same institutions were able through federalism and provincial democracy to resolve adequately the more intense regional antagonisms – the main exceptions being the insurgencies of the Nagas and Mizos, and the stalemate over self-determination in Kashmir.[12]

By contrast the authorities in Pakistan, imbued with an Islamic fundamentalism whereby all are one under Allah, utterly failed in this task. In 1952 Pakistani authorities declared Urdu, spoken by less than 7% of the population, to be the unifying and Islamizing national language. Its most immediate consequence was language riots in East Bengal and the beginning of a popular language movement intent on preserving Bengali culture. Unlike India, the Pakistani authorities did not pursue a policy of inter-regional compromise and accommodation, but instead aggravated the national question within its borders by means of armed force and the characteristic arrogance of military politics.

Thirty years after the establishment of Pakistan the underlying religious ideology of the state remains a violent issue. Other than Israel, Pakistan is the only national state in modern times to have been formed on the basis of religious principles. The original theory was that Islam alone would unite the diverse cultures of the Sindhi, Baluchi, Pathan, Punjabi and Bengali. In the eyes of Allah and the state each would be first and foremost a Pakistani. But to Pakistan's 'minority nationalities' – and even to the 'majority nationality', the Bengali – Pakistan's state structure came to be dominated, if not monopolized, by the more advanced province in the Punjab, which at partition already controlled the military. Also, Mahajirs, refugees who came from India, rose quickly into dominant positions in business and the professions. This arrangement was institutionalized in 1954, when provincial boundaries were dissolved, and West Pakistan adopted the 'one unit' system of national administration.

The struggle over the national question intensified. Between 1955 and 1970 the internal politics of the country was an unending battle against the 'one unit' system. Those who fought it said it denied and was intended to destroy their own distinctive cultures while enhancing the privileges of the Punjab and Mahajir elites. After Ayub Khan's decade-old Martial Law administration collapsed in 1969, the new military administration of General Yahya Khan, which took power, promised two major reforms: a return to civilian rule through general elections to be held in December 1970, and the elimination of the 'one unit' system. In November 1969 Yahya Khan officially declared the end of the 'one unit' structure and re-established in West Pakistan the boundaries of the provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan, Frontier and the Punjab.

But the national question was not destined to be so easily resolved. The 1970 elections brought a sweeping victory for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League in East Pakistan. In the provinces of the Frontier and Baluchistan the National Awami Party (N.A.P.), led by Wali Khan, won control of the provincial governments. Responsible for the political triumph of the Awami League and the N.A.P. was the fact that both reflected the national aspirations of Bengal, Baluchistan, and the Frontier. Each had laid down as the leading principle of its programme the establishment of broad autonomous rights for the provinces within a democratic republic.

The Awami League won 167 out of the 169 seats from East Bengal in the National Assembly of the unified Pakistan. This constituted an absolute majority in the assembly and meant that Mujibur Rahman should have become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. But, as a Bengali scholar pointed out:

> At that point it was clear that if the elected National Assembly was called into being, the Awami League would easily be able to enact a constitution based on its autonomy programmes, and this would in turn convert Pakistan into nothing more than a loose confederation. As an elite group with high

> salaries and entrenched privileges, spending more than half the country's yearly budget, the armed forces had a material stake in keeping East Bengal as an integral part of Pakistan.[13]

Pakistan's military leadership chose not to transfer power to the elected Awami League administration. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leader of Pakistan's People's Party, which had won majorities in the provinces of Sindh and the Punjab with 81 seats in the National Assembly, was instrumental in the military authorities' refusal to convene the National Assembly. In demagogic style Bhutto declared that the Punjab and the Sindh were the 'bastions of power' in Pakistan and that, since his party now dominated those provinces, he would not accept any constitution determined by the 'brute majority' of the Awami League. Bhutto threatened to boycott the assembly if Mujib became Prime Minister on a platform of transforming Pakistan into a loose confederation of provinces.

On March 1st 1971 the martial law authorities announced an indefinite postponement of the date for convening the National Assembly originally scheduled for March 3rd. The reaction in East Pakistan was immediate and violent. Demands for complete independence were issued by the powerful and militant student federation, the Chattra League. The Military Junta of Pakistan entered into new negotiations with the Awami League leadership while a mass movement based on non-cooperation and strikes crippled East Bengal. The negotiations, however, were merely a ruse for a massive military build-up. On the night of March 25th 1971 the most violent and brutal act of political repression in South Asian history took place. Tanks and armoured personnel carriers of the Pakistan Army rumbled through Dacca. It was remembered as *'Kala Ratri'* or *'The Black Night'*, and on the first evening alone thousands were killed in the indiscriminate firing and shelling. Details of these events have been extensively published elsewhere. The purpose of this book is not to repeat a history of the massacres which followed the night of the 25th. But it was this event more than any other which opened a new and qualitatively different phase in the history of South Asia.[14]

Debates on the national question have occupied Marxist writers for more than a generation. The most well known of these discussions are those between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg during the early part of the century.[15] However, in the context of contemporary history, Bangladesh represents an important example of the principles which occupied these earlier debates. There is hardly a sharper example where the right of national self-determination presented itself in such definite and clear-cut terms.

This work is not an appropriate place for a comprehensive discussion of these issues. Nevertheless, certain of Lenin's more significant comments bear repeating in the present context. For, more than any other element, the national question, combining as it has with the frustrations of post-colonial capitalist development, has become the driving force behind the emergence of radical politics in Pakistan. In his *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, Lenin commented that:

> The masses know perfectly well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantage of a big market and a big state. They will, therefore, resort to secession only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse. In that case, the interests of capitalist development and of the freedom of the class struggle will be best served by secession . . . .
>
> The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation. This demand, therefore, is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation, and the formation of small states. It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression. The closer a democratic state system is to complete freedom the less frequent and less ardent will the desire for separation be in practice, because big states afford indisputable advantages, both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests of the masses and, furthermore, these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism.
>
> Recognition of self-determination is not synonymous with recognition of federation as a principle. One may be a determined opponent of that principle and a champion of democratic centralism, but still prefer federation to national inequality as the only way to full democratic centralism. It was from this standpoint that Marx, who was a centralist, preferred even the federation of Ireland and England to the forcible subordination of Ireland to the English . . . .
>
> It is impossible to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this *requires* the abolition of classes, i.e. the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation – socialist production – is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but this foundation must also carry a democratically organized state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes *reality* 'only' – 'only!' – with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres . . . .[16]

Bangladesh's independence in December 1971 did not end Pakistan's crisis over the national question. Less than two years later, the new authorities of Pakistan's central administration under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed the provincial government of Baluchistan. Following years of agitation for the right to a measure of local self-government, Baluchistan had elected in 1970 the National Awami Party to head the provincial administration. When Bhutto dismissed the local administration in February 1973 at the encouragement of the Shah of Iran, he alleged that, like the Bengalis, the Baluchis were nothing but a bunch of secessionists. In the traditional Pakistani military manner used to resolve difficult and complex issues, massive numbers of troops were sent into the province to crush support for the elected assembly. Open rebellion among the rugged Baluchi tribesmen broke out and since 1973 an intense and bitter guerilla struggle has been fought out in the hills of the province. In four years the Pakistani military forces are said to have suffered nearly 6,000 casualties, a figure which is comparable to their losses in the 1971 conflict.[17] Unlike the Bengali situation, there is no issue of independence being posed, but an interview conducted by this writer in Baluchistan with the guerilla military commander, Chakar Khan Marri, sums up the question which faced both Bengalis and Baluchis in the Pakistani state. Marri's remarks bring into subcontinental focus the issues posed by Lenin's comments on the national question more than half a century earlier. Chakar Khan Marri is a military commander of the Baluchistan People's Liberation Front (Pakistan). The Pakistani Army is reported to have set a price of 50,000 rupees on his head. According to Marri:

> We consider our struggle not to be a secessionist movement nor a movement towards independence. It is a movement for autonomy within the Pakistani state with equal rights for each nationality in its own governing. But the roots of the current problem go back to the very founding of Pakistan. The very theory of 'two nations' living in India based on religion is a false theory we do not accept. The Muslim leadership in India felt that when the British left they would be in the minority and always in the opposition, but never in power. And therefore they wanted their own state. This expression of the Muslim bourgeoisie was the Muslim League.
>
> They did not acknowledge the fact that the Pakistan which broke away from India was a 'multi-national' state of Bengalis, Sindhis, Baluch, Punjabi, and Pathans. They stuck to the point that religion is the basis of Pakistan and that on the basis of religion there was only 'one nation' or nationality in Pakistan. We feel religion is a personal matter of any individual and that no country in the world is based on religion alone except Pakistan and Israel. But in Pakistan today the main crisis centres on the rights of the minority nationalities. This cannot be obscured in the name of Islam.
>
> The whole national question concerns the rights of national minorities which, in Pakistan today, encompass three provinces and nearly 40% of the population. Prior to 1971 three-fourths of the country's population was facing this issue. In 1971 Bangladesh came into being and the national question came into sharp perspective at that time. The basic question is that in a multinational state the very fact that if one nation comes to dominate the state and exploit the minority nationalities for its own purpose, then those smaller nationalities are going to resist that exploitation. Let us try to define what a nation is. We do not consider Pakistan to be the sort of nation state that the government talks of. A nation is determined by its language, culture, history, and geographical affiliations.
>
> The culture and language question is very apparent in Pakistan. It led to civil war in 1971. From this point of view there are at the moment four nations in Pakistan. We say that Pakistan is not a one nation state but a multinational state, and we want that each nation should live in this country on an equal basis. We want that each culture in each province should develop on its own historical lines and that no other culture must be imposed on any of the nations.

> We feel that the solution to the problems of the national minorities in Pakistan cannot take place in the bourgeois set-up in Pakistan as it is today. The way the bourgeoisie is using religion opposes the realisation of these questions. We feel that the problem of national minorities can only be solved through a hard and long nationalist struggle; be it necessary for it to take the shape of an armed struggle. The exact form it will take will resolve itself as the struggle goes on. In our view it will most probably take on a socialist aspect.[18]

Although the Bengali and the Baluchi situations differ in a number of important respects, they share the fundamental feature of having confronted an undemocratic state with the demand for autonomy and democratic rights. In both instances parties representing this standpoint were elected at the provincial level, and in the case of the Awami League it achieved an absolute national majority. Having been obstructed in establishing their elected position, they were forced into conditions of armed struggle.

The Bangladesh Left and the War of Independence

At the time of the Pakistani crackdown in East Bengal the country's revolutionary Left was far from unified on the national question. The controversy engendered by the issue reduced certain groups to impotent disarray and created serious divisions which have persisted until the present day. In addition, the attitude adopted by China towards the 'East Pakistan crisis' further confused a number of pro-Peking Bengali groups whose influence among the country's intelligentsia was significant at the time.

All the pro-Peking factions shared a sense of frustration over the Awami League's leadership of Bengal's greatest mass political movement. The Awami League was a bourgeois nationalist party whose principal objective in the struggle, first for autonomy and later for independence, was to establish the Bengali bourgeoisie as a class in its own right and not subordinate to West Pakistan's capitalist interests. While the pro-Peking Marxists unitedly condemned the crackdown of the 'fascist' Yahya regime, several groups among them were reluctant to back a bourgeois nationalist movement which in their view was supported by 'Indian expansionism' and 'Soviet social imperialism'.

Most important of these groups was the East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) led by Mohammed Toaha and Abdul Huq. The E.P.C.P.-M.L.'s position on the national question was at best ambiguous and at worst collaborationist. During the late sixties in a series of bitter debates with another pro-Peking faction, Toaha and Huq had condemned the thesis advanced by the East Bengal Communist Party (E.B.C.P.) led by Abdul Matin and Alauddin Ahmed. The E.B.C.P. had argued that the independence of East Pakistan achieved under the leadership of a worker-peasant alliance was the correct strategy for socialism in the region. Toaha's party (E.B.C.P.-M.L.) rejected this position, arguing that it over-emphasized the conflict between different sections of the national bourgeoisie in East and West Pakistan, and diverted the attention of the urban and rural proletariat in both wings from a struggle against their common class enemy. The E.P.C.P.-M.L. criticized Matin's group saying their platform would only aid the East Pakistani bourgeoisie, led by the Awami League, in bringing about the secession of East Pakistan under bourgeois leadership.[19]

The crackdown by the Pakistan Army and the extent of its brutality made the independence of Bangladesh an irreversible certainty. Nevertheless, within the E.P.C.P.-M.L. deep disagreement persisted over the party's position in this the most wrenching crisis to grip the region. A faction led by Abdul Huq still argued that the entire confrontation was the product of Indian expansionism backed by the Soviet Union with the sole intent of destroying the territorial integrity of Pakistan. Huq's colleague in the party, Mohammed Toaha, could not agree fully with this position. Nearly four months into the Liberation War the party split in two. Huq's group maintained the party's original name including the title 'East Pakistan'. His group made contact with the Pakistani martial law authorities indicating they would co-operate against imminent Indian aggression, if only the army would stop its brutal attacks on the people. Following independence Huq was accused of collaboration with the Pakistan Army. As of 1977 Huq's group continued to exist as an underground splinter group still calling itself the East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). This writer extensively interviewed Huq in June 1976 in Dacca.

On the other hand Mohammed Toaha established a base in the Noakhali-Chittagong region and organized his followers under a new banner, the East Bengal Communist Party (M.L.). While Toaha agreed with Huq that India and the Soviet Union were the major forces behind the Awami League's Calcutta-based provisional government, Toaha remained ambivalent about whether or not to support a movement for national independence led by the Awami League. In both the towns and the countryside the population, almost to the last villager, had turned against Pakistan and in favour of national independence. Toaha's faction ultimately adopted a strategic position they termed a 'two-way war'. On the one hand they fought the Pakistani Army and on the other they fought forces loyal to the Awami League. At times it was difficult to ascertain whether Toaha regarded the Mukti Bahini forces, which he identified with the Awami League, or the Pakistani Army, to be the main enemy.

During an interview with this writer in April 1976 at the Baluchistan port town of Gwadar on the Pakistan coast, Colonel Ashiq Hossain, the Pakistan Army officer who formerly commanded the Noakhali sector, claimed that he personally conducted negotiations with Toaha on the possibility of mutual co-operation in joint operations against the Mukti Bahini guerilla forces. These discussions, accoridng to Hossain, had ended without agreement and were ultimately broken off. Within Toaha's camp further disagreements arose over this very ambiguity. Badruddin Umar, one of the country's leading Marxist intellectuals, left the party, citing as the reason Toaha's inability to understand the national question. Umar regarded the Pakistan army as the main enemy and argued in support of a united front in the struggle for independence regardless of whether the Bengali bourgeoisie was to play a leading role. Other sections of what was regarded as the pro-Peking Left, under the umbrella of the National Awami Party (led by the aged peasant agitator, the 'Red Maulana' Bhashani, whom Toaha had once served as secretary), unequivocably backed the struggle for independence.

China and the Bangladesh Movement

To understand the disarray of many so-called pro-Peking parties that developed as the independence war gained momentum, it is necessary to understand China's standpoint during the crisis. From the beginning China emphasized that the entire question of East Pakistan was Pakistan's internal affair which did not warrant outside interference. Radio Peking repeatedly warned that India and the Soviet Union would attempt to intervene to cause the break-up of Pakistan. No public statement was ever issued by the Chinese with regard to the military crackdown of March 25th. The Chinese would have considered any such statement interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. All their public comments focused purely on superpower rivalries and India's expansionist drive within the region. No discussion of the national question or of Lenin's position on the right to self-determination under certain conditions of severe national oppression ever appeared in these commentaries.

On April 13th, two weeks after the crackdown, the *Pakistan Times* published a letter from Chou En-Lai to Pakistan's military President, General Yahya Khan. In the message Chou stated that the 'unification of Pakistan and the unity of the people of East and West Pakistan are the basic guarantees for Pakistan to attain prosperity and strength.' Chou also referred to 'a handful of persons' who wanted to sabotage the unity of Pakistan. By printing this letter and by sending Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on highly publicized visits to Peking, the Pakistani authorities wished to create the impression of unequivocal Chinese backing, should war ultimately develop with India. Chou had concluded his note to Yahya with the comment: 'Your Excellency may rest assured that, should the Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan, the Chinese Government and people will, as always, firmly support the Pakistan Government and people in their just struggle to safeguard state sovereignty and national independence.'[20]

In private, however, Chinese officials were less than enthusiastic about the military operations in East Pakistan. In November 1971, when Bhutto went to Peking as Yahya Khan's emissary to enlist China's support against imminent military intervention by India, the Chinese presented him with a list of sixty pro-Peking leaders who had been killed by the Pakistan Army.[21] During the same visit, at a dinner reception given in honour of the visiting Pakistani delegation, an argument developed between Bhutto and a Bengali diplomat still on the Pakistan Embassy's staff in Peking. Bhutto was loudly praising the heroism and action of the Pakistani Army, when he said, 'If India attacks East Pakistan, the Ganges will turn red.' The Bengali diplomat, no longer capable of repressing his anger, shouted at Bhutto, 'It is better, if you first make the Indus [West Pakistan's principal river] red.' The Chinese were extremely embarrassed by this public 'quarrel among brothers' going on before them in the midst of a state banquet. Chou En-Lai reportedly turned to Bhutto and said severely, 'You cannot solve this problem in Peking. Go to Dacca and solve it.'[22]

In 1974 evidence emerged indicating that the Pakistani authorities had apparently tampered with the text of Chou En-Lai's message when they published it. Anwar Hossain, the Bengali foreign-language expert at Peking Radio from 1966 to 1972, and the only private citizen of Bangladesh living in China at the time of the 1971 Indo-Bangladesh War, claimed in an interview that:

> Chou En-Lai's letter did not appear in full in the Pakistani press. The most important sentence of the letter was deleted by the Pakistanis. I know this, since I did the translation from the original into Bengali for the Peking Radio broadcast. In the last paragraph of the letter, Chou En-Lai wrote: 'The question of East Pakistan should be settled according to the wishes of the people of East Pakistan.'[23]

Hossain said that the Chinese had, in private discussions, strongly urged Pakistan to release the then imprisoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and return to negotiations before the situation led to war with India. In China Hossain himself regularly visited communes and factories to condemn the actions of the Pakistan authorities. In Peking he was told by Chinese friends and officials that they personally condemned Yahya Khan's military tactics. But on numerous occasions when he urged them to make their views known in a public declaration, they replied that at the level of state-to-state relations they could not interfere in the internal politics of another country.

The spring and summer of Bangladesh's War of Independence was also a period of great intra-party struggle within China over which line would win in the area of foreign policy. Lin Piao's alleged plot reached a climax in September, ending in his death. The formulation of a policy towards the conflict in South Asia occurred as a sidelight to China's new and improved relations with America and Lin Piao's reported attempt to capture power. Moreover, in 1971 the future of Taiwan was being raised as a major issue in the Western press. Strong lobbies in Japan and the United States were reviving the Taiwanese Independence Movement with an unprecedented spate of publicity. China again stated to the world that Taiwan was an integral part of China and that the issue warranted no foreign interference. In these circumstances the Chinese apparently would have found open support for the Bengali independence movement, even within the traditional and specific reference of Lenin's position on the national question, a difficult trial of general principles.

The Chinese leadership's primary concern in this instance, as in others such as Southern Africa, was the emerging role of the Soviet Union. In its assessment of the balance of international forces, the Soviets represent a rising and powerful social imperialist force in the process of expanding its influence on a world scale. The Chinese viewed post-Vietnam America as a chastened giant, a declining imperialist power. The main danger in this parallel rise and fall of imperial strength is, in their view, the Soviet Union. The Chinese, as their public statements indicated, considered the 'East Pakistan Crisis' primarily in its international or superpower context, and not with regard to the internal contradictions of Pakistani society.

When India did eventually intervene militarily in the Bangladesh crisis, Radio Peking broadcast one denunciation after another of Indian 'expansionism' and the Soviet Union's role in Pakistan's 'dismemberment'. As Indian soldiers swept towards Dacca, eliminating the last pockets of the Pakistani Army's resistance, a senior Chinese diplomat at the United Nations in New York asked this writer 'How can the Indians be genuinely claiming to liberate the Bengalis, when in over twenty years they have not liberated the millions of Indian untouchables from the oppression of the caste system, poverty, and landlordism?'[24]

Chou En-Lai reportedly did say, however, that by intervening India was picking up a great stone which it would one day drop on its own feet. The Chinese Premier's remarks proved prophetic as relations between India and Bangladesh deteriorated in the post-independence period. Nevertheless, the Chinese position was a continuous source of great disappointment for many Bengali nationalists.

The Chinese were not the only ones on the left who opposed Indian intervention. In Calcutta, the weekly *Frontier*, a prominent left forum sympathetic to Indian Naxalite views of the time, supported the Bangladesh struggle for independence while firmly opposing any Indian intervention in the conflict. Except for the Calcutta-based leadership of the Awami League which was pressing for a rapid resolution of the conflict, many Bangladeshis, including Taher, were opposed to Indian intervention. In their view, independence won on the coat tails of foreign soldiers would be an independence of compromise and only leave unfinished the revolutionary transformation they hoped for.

The Awami League and India's authorities both feared that the leadership of the liberation struggle might gradually slip from their control, into the hands of those radical forces which were unambiguous in their stand on the national question and deeply committed to the Liberation War. If a guerrilla-style insurgency had persisted, these forces would undoubtedly have come to dominate the politics of the movement. It was this trend that the Indian authorities were determined to pre-empt by intervention. Bengali military commanders estimated at the time that without Indian involvement Pakistani forces would have been defeated within three years. At the end of such a period, if the strategic course advocated by Taher, Ziauddin and other officers of the left-wing military group had been pursued, Bangladesh would have emerged with an army of 100,000 peasants, organized into armed battalions as the precursors of a people's army.

While Bengalis were fighting for independence, India had another goal. The pre-emptive quality of the intervention was not the only dimension. The Bangladesh crisis provided the decisive opportunity for the most powerful state of the subcontinent to destroy its principal national rival in South Asia. Inflicting a humiliating and irreversible defeat on Pakistani forces was not a chance India's leadership was about to pass up.

The confusion and disunity of Bangladesh's pro-Peking parties over the question of independence pushed them into isolation and into a position of peripheral insignificance during the events of 1971. Certain groups ignored the Chinese attitude towards Bangladesh and pushed ahead on the basis of their own judgement. In Rajshahi District, the local section of the E.B.C.P. led by Ohidul Rahman gathered more than 1,000 guerillas under its banner and completely co-operated with the guerrilla forces of the Mukti Bahini. This section of the party played a leading role in liberating the Attrai region of Rajshahi from Pakistani Army control. The Pabna wing of the E.B.C.P., led by Matin-Alauddin, initially took a commanding role in the early resistance of its District immediately following the crackdown. They killed more than 100 West Pakistani soldiers in early acts of resistance and advocated an alliance of all nationalist classes, including the national bourgeoisie, in a united armed struggle of national liberation. But Matin and Alauddin were reported to have later modified their stand when China's own position became known in April.[25]

For Bangladesh's radical movement the situation in 1971 was a difficult test case in the exercise of independent thinking. This extended to groups outside the Marxist ideological orbit. Besides the pro-Chinese groups, there existed a second trend on the left. The pro-Moscow parties – the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Moni) and the National Awami Party (Muzzafar) – gave their active backing and support to the Awami League's struggle. However, their actual activity remained of little significance to the overall development of events. Like the C.P.I. in India, the pro-Moscow left advanced the thesis that socialism could be achieved peacefully through the parliamentary path. Therefore, they advocated a general alliance of all leftist forces and secular democratic political parties. In December 1970 they participated in the elections and supported the 11-point programme of the East Pakistan Student Action Committee, but their distinct form and ideological attraction was of little consequence to the general movement. According to one observer, 'neither the pro-Peking leftists nor the Awami League paid any heed to them.'[26]

Jashod: From Nucleus To Party

Besides the two broad pro-Peking and pro-Moscow trends in Bangladesh's radical politics, a third Marxist stream existed. Before 1972 little was known of this group. Only recently did details regarding its existence, as a self-conscious centre claiming to have functioned for a decade deep within the Bengali nationalist movement, become known. An understanding of the November 7th insurrection in 1975 and the events leading to the execution of Taher are inseparable from the history of this political stream. Only in 1972 did it first openly identify itself as the Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (J.S.D.) or Jashod (Socialist National Party).

The history of the J.S.D., according to recent party documents and statements by its leadership, began in 1962 when 'a group of conscious young men' formed a 'nucleus' at Dacca University. Their position differed from other radical groups in several important, particularly strategic, respects. Like many others, they held the view that socialism was the only solution to East Bengal's vast poverty, severe backwardness and increasing underdevelopment. They argued, however, that the independence of East Bengal, or Bangladesh, was a necessary element and condition in the struggle for a socialist party. They organized themselves into what they termed a nucleus which centred around a number of personalities, including Sirajul Alam Khan, the former General Secretary of the East Pakistan Students' League. The principal thesis of the group was that the national question had to be approached as *the major* political contradiction of Bengali society *at that stage* of history. The exploitation of East Pakistan by capital based in the western wing had taken on the form of 'national' oppression. And the economic bias of West Pakistani based capitalism provided, in their view, the pivot for a mass political movement.[27]

Other Marxists, as we saw earlier, had argued that any analysis which highlighted the national question between the two wings would only deflect the masses from class struggle and encourage the secession of East Pakistan under bourgeois leadership. This strategy implied a unified struggle throughout all of Pakistan. On this strategic standpoint the early J.S.D. differed fundamentally. Their early nucleus rejected notions calling for a long-term co-ordinated struggle in both wings as being impractical and unrealistic. Pakistan with its thousand mile land breach, its multinational make-up, and the highly distinct economic and social formations existing in the separate halves, represented in their view a unique entity.

The experience, they argued, of an intense nationalist movement in East Bengal, which at the same time would struggle for democratic rights against an autocratic military regime, would draw millions into the experience of mass politics and agitation. Pakistan's history of anti-democratic military regimes made it certain that state violence would be used to crush such a movement, and thus the final achievement of democratic rights for the people of East Bengal would ultimately have to take the form of armed struggle. Once such a stage had been reached the J.S.D. nucleus believed it would be possible to transform an armed nationalist movement into a revolutionary one.

The failure of communist movements in South Asia had in many important respects been a failure to link the politics of the communist movement unequivocably with the fight for national independence. In 1942 the Indian National Congress launched its 'Quit India' movement against the English. While tens of thousands of nationalists went to prison, India's communists at Stalin's request formed a united front with the British in the world-wide fight against fascism. The Indian National Congress also opposed fascism, but it was not willing to co-operate in a common programme as long as India remained a colony of Britain without firm guarantees of independence after the war. After independence it took years for Indian communism to overcome the stigma of having collaborated with the British.

In certain respects the thesis of the early J.S.D. nucleus was shared by other initially small Marxist tendencies such as the East Bengal Communist Party, the Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, the East Bengal Workers' Movement and the Mythi group, in so far as they all called for the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. While important theoretical differences existed between these groups, over whether East Bengal was a backward capitalist society or still semi-feudal, possibly the most significant difference appeared in terms of actual practice and the carrying forward of a long range political strategy. While groups like the E.B.C.P. advocated the separation of East Pakistan under the leadership of a workers party, the early J.S.D. nucleus took a different tactical line. Under the leadership of Sirajul Alam Khan, they self-consciously joined the Awami League and immersed themselves within the party. Unto themselves they were a definable, self-conscious, and independent nucleus within the party. To others they were merely the most prominent, most militant and most radical of the Awami League's youthful cadres. They had joined the Awami League because it was nationalist in orientation and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was willing to advance the struggle for autonomy. But from the very beginning of their association they took the view that in reality there existed 'two parties in one'. And when the appropriate moment came, they expected one to emerge from the other.

This group quickly developed a commanding position in the powerful East Pakistan Students' League (E.P.S.L.). Together with the pro-Peking East Pakistan Students' Union (E.P.S.U.) they played a leading role in the 1966 and 1969 agitations against Ayub Khan's dictatorship. In 1969 the Field Marshal, an autocrat who had lasted a decade, was finally toppled from power in the face of extraordinary student and worker protests. A new interim military regime headed by Yahya Khan took over, which (as we noted earlier), besides dissolving the one-unit system, promised national elections.

These elections occurred in December 1970. In East Pakistan many radical groups were against participation in the electoral campaign. The J.S.D. nucleus, however, existing within the Awami League supported the ballot and spread its cadres and student followers into the villages to organize on behalf of the programme of autonomy. For them the campaign opened up an important opportunity to send thousands of urban educated youth to the villages. Two goals were accomplished: the urban youth with their idealistic concepts of socialism, democracy and nationalism were put in real and daily contact with the back-breaking oppression under which the peasantry existed; and the peasants, needing no one to explain to them their misery, did nevertheless garner from these book-learned students new ideas about politics and class struggle.

Crucial decisions were being made long before the elections. Six months prior to the voting on August 12th 1970, at an extended meeting of the Central Committee of the E.P.S.L., Swapan Kumar Choudhury, a protege of Sirajul Alam Khan, introduced a resolution for a Swadhin Samajtantrik Bangladesh (Independent Socialist Bangladesh). Three months earlier on June 6th the group had drafted a declaration of independence and prepared the design for a new national flag. It was to be the image of a red sun having risen on an emerald green background.[28] Today it serves as the country's national banner. If the situation developed as they anticipated, they were prepared to push for independence.

The December elections brought a landslide victory for the Awami League. As has been described earlier, this led to a major impasse when the military authorities refused to convene the National Assembly on schedule and accept the results of the election. On March 1st 1971, when the regime made their announcement of an indefinite postponement, the nucleus within the Awami League out of which J.S.D. was later to grow, issued an immediate call for independence. Faced with this new situation Sheikh Mujib was uncertain and wavering. He was unable to decide whether to push beyond his existing position in favour of federated autonomy or to make an unequivocal demand for full independence. On March 2nd, at a mammoth rally which Mujib attended, A.S.M. Abdur Rab, who would later become General Secretary of the J.S.D., ceremonially burned the Pakistani flag and hoisted the new national banner. The following day, at another mass meeting on the Paltan Maidan, Shahjahan Siraj, who also later emerged to become a leading figure in the J.S.D., read out the *Manifesto of an Independent Bangladesh*. Finally, on March 7th the student leadership of what was now called the Bangladesh (no longer East Pakistan) Students League presented Mujib with an ultimatum: he must declare independence or they would abandon him and take an independent course. At this stage Mujib openly complained to an Agence France-Presse correspondent:

> Is the West Pakistan government not aware that I am the only one able to save East Pakistan from communism? If they take a position to fight I shall be pushed out of power, and the Naxalites will intervene in my name. If I make too many concessions, I shall lose my authority. I am in a difficult situation.[29]

'Since the strings of the movement were in our hands, Mujib did not dare to defy us,' Harunur Rashid, an activist of the 1971 movement told this writer. Rashid later became the Acting General Secretary of the J.S.D.[30] On March 7th at a rally of more than a million persons at the Ramna Race Course, Mujib finally declared that the struggle had now become one for complete 'emancipation and independence'. The 25th of March arrived. In a blitzkrieg of death Bengali nationalism found the crucible of its birth: the War of Liberation was on.

The Military Debate: People's War versus Conventional War

Having established the situation in which Bangladesh moved towards independence, we can now return to the events of Taher's life. A pre-condition to this man's biography is an understanding of the history of the independence movement. The two are so deeply intertwined that one cannot be understood without the other.

At the time of the crackdown Taher was stationed in West Pakistan. He was serving as an officer with the elite commando unit known as the Special Services Group. However, on the day of the 25th – the day Bengalis were to call the *Black Night* – he was attending an advanced course at Pakistan's School of Infantry and Tactics at Quetta.

Four days later Taher was arrested for blunt remarks he had made about the atrocities then taking place in the Eastern region. By the intervention of the school's Commandant, a close friend, he was eventually released and ordered to return to his headquarters at the Khariar Cantonment. His unit, stripped of its Bengali officers and *jawans*, had been sent into action in the Eastern region.

The civil war brought many Bengali soldiers and officers who were stranded in the West, face to face with the most difficult dilemma of their lives: were they to remain safely in West Pakistan, aloof from the nationalist cause, or should they risk their lives to escape and join the liberation struggle which so desperately needed their military talent? The war trapped nearly 20,000 Bengali soldiers and 1,000 officers in the West. But it also trapped them in the vortex of the national question. They still had to choose: were they Pakistanis or Bangladeshis? As in all such situations, some became the cowards of their convictions, others risked all they had. Taher vividly captured the atmosphere of this period in the testimony he read before the secret tribunal which condemned him to death in July 1976. (Taher's complete trial testimony remains a secret document in Bangladesh. Obtained from Bengali sources, the full text is reproduced at the end of Part I.)

Speaking to the Tribunal Chairman, Colonel Yusuf Haider, an officer repatriated only in 1974 to an independent Bangladesh, and who had remained in West Pakistan throughout the Liberation War, Taher said:

> I recall here the night of the 25th March 1971, when the Pakistani Army unleashed brutal attacks against our people. We had no choice, but to win that war which was thrust on us. Had we lost, a worse kind of slavery would have been imposed upon us... Those were the days of trial for us who were in West Pakistan. At that time I did not hesitate to respond to our nation's call. The barbaric purpose of the Military Junta was not unknown to us who were in West Pakistan when from the General Head-

> quarters of the Pakistan Army the message went out: 'Burn everything. Kill everyone in sight.' ...
>
> On the 25th March I was at Quetta attending a Senior Technical Course in the School of Infantry and Tactics. When I heard the announcement of General Yahya Khan over the radio on the evening of the 26th of March, I came to know what a catastrophe had fallen on my people: For the whole night I walked on the lonely roads of Quetta...
>
> At the time several junior officers, lieutenants and second lieutenants approached and sought my advice as to what they should do in this time. I told them in clear terms that their only concern was to escape from Pakistan and join the Liberation War. They also informed me that a few senior Bengali officers who were stationed at that time in Quetta had refused to talk to them, refused to entertain them, lest their loyalty be doubted by their master. Some of these same senior officers I find today holding important positions in the Armed Forces of Bangladesh and they are now a party in this attempt to try me here.[31]

The Bengali nationalists trapped in West Pakistan believed there was only one possible choice – escape. After one unsuccessful attempt through the Kashmir hills, which faltered when a crucial contact failed to show up at a rendezvous, Taher planned a second escape route. This time the attempt involved a young Bengali officer, Mohammed Ziauddin, who was stationed at the Army's General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. Along with two other Bengalis, they made a daring late night crossing into India via the Sialkot sector of the Pakistan border. The escape of these two men was to have an important impact on the development of the liberation struggle and the post-independence structure of the Bangladeshi armed forces. Immediately after independence Taher and Ziauddin would between them command 90% of the country's infantry. Together they would begin to initiate forms of military organization hitherto unheard of in the sub-continent.

On arrival at the front, both Taher and Ziauddin were given sector commands. Fighting was already going on. Immediately after the 25th of March, spontaneous resistance began from civilians who organized themselves into irregular guerrilla units. Initially, isolated out-posts of Pakistani soldiers suffered serious losses. Among the Bengali armed forces stationed in East Pakistan nearly a thousand troops of the East Bengal Regiment and 5,000 paramilitary police stationed in the capital were wiped out by the swift and concentrated attacks of the Pakistan Army. The whole of the East Bengal Regiment numbered roughly 6,000 men of whom only 3,000 survived to regroup in India. Of the 14,000 lightly armed troops who constituted the border security force, only 8,000 survived.[32] Except for a handful of collaborators – who were mainly in the police and intelligence branches – all these units immediately joined the resistance.

In the outlying cantonments and military barracks Bengali units had more warning and time to react. Under the leadership of young Bengali officers such as Ziaur Rahman in Chittagong, Khaled Musharraf in Comilla, Usman in Khustia and Shafiullah in Mymensingh, Bengali troops mutinied against the

Pakistan Army and killed many of their former military colleagues. At Chittagong, units under the command of Major Ziaur Rahman managed to hold the town for several days. Over Chittagong Radio Zia declared Bangladesh to be independent. Nearly 100,000 Pakistani troops fanned out from the capital and within a few days had recaptured all the major towns, inflicting enormous casualties on the civilian population. Regular Bengali military units, by and large, soon retreated over the Indian border to reorganize.

As the slaughter continued during the night of the crackdown, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman chose to adopt the Gandhian tactic of non-violent resistance. While he waited at his house, the rest of the Awami League leadership ran for their lives. Mujib was arrested and flown to West Pakistan. Most of the other leading figures in the party managed to reach India where the New Delhi authorities welcomed them. Immediate permission was granted to establish the first provisional government of Bangladesh with Calcutta as its base.

By July, when Taher took over command of the 11th Sector comprising Tangail and his home district of Mymensingh, an intense debate was already underway within the Bangladesh Command over the strategic course to be adopted and developed. Both India and the Awami League's government-in-exile were well aware that a prolonged nationalist struggle might evolve and be transformed into a revolutionary war.

The military debate revolved around the three principal forms of armed resistance to the Pakistani forces, each representing a distinct conception of military strategy. At times they flowed together, at other moments they moved independently; but each reflected a particular political trend struggling for ultimate hegemony in the Liberation War.

The first, which may be termed 'official' resistance, came directly out of the post-colonial army tradition and focused on the surviving members of established Bengali military units which had escaped massacre. With the co-operation of the Indian authorities and under the auspices of a number of Bangladesh military officers, these remnants were organized into two brigades based in the Indian border territories of Assam and Tripura. In their command structure and organization they were wholly conventional. Moreover, the strategic concepts which they reflected were typical, in mentality and outlook, of the subcontinent's post-colonial armies. In many ways they still seemed more British than the British. Officers' tents were carpeted, whisky was swilled in the evenings and Bengali batmen waited hand and foot on their officers.

These main force units were under the command of General M.A.G. Osmany, a retired Pakistan Army officer. Operational command of the brigade stationed in the Indian territory of Tripura was under the direction of Khaled Musharraf. With its headquarters at Agartala it took the name of the K-Force. In the North, a brigade based in Assam was under the direction of Ziaur Rahman and called itself the Z-Force. By concentrating at an early stage the best existing military manpower in these two forces, the Bangladesh High Command opted for a strategy of confronting Pakistani forces by staging cross-border raids against enemy targets within India. While each of these units expanded, it remained clear that neither the Z-Force nor the K-Force were sufficiently strong in numbers or material resources to defeat the 100,000 regular and irregular troops of the Pakistan Army. Ultimately this strategic course would need to rely on an allied army – the Indian Army – in order to vanquish Pakistani forces in the 'set-piece' battles of conventional warfare. Here Osmany, the Awami League and the Indian commanders were all agreed: a rapid resolution of the war was essential from a political standpoint and their objective was to bring an Awami League government to power in Bangladesh as soon as possible.

By the middle of April 1971 the Indian government had decided its own national interests warranted massive backing of the Bangladesh cause. India had fought two expensive and inconclusive wars with Pakistan. Now the opportunity of a century lay at its door. It would cut Pakistan down to size and establish itself as the unquestioned dominant power in the region. The Indian Congress Party's interest in Bangladesh was to bring to power in Dacca a regime similar in character to its own secularism and international alignment. The implication for Bangladesh of a strategy which stressed reliance on conventional military formations was, inexorably, dependence on India for bases, training and equipment.

Within the Bangladesh military command an alternate strategic approach was being put forward. It centred around a group of experienced commando officers who rejected the strategic concepts being advanced by General Osmany and the Indian field commanders. This dissident group's views were most clearly reflected in the military ideas of Taher and Ziauddin. As sector commanders fighting inside Bangladesh, they rejected the main military line of the time which called for all sector headquarters to be set up on Indian territory. Taher and Ziauddin insisted on the contrary, urging that the capital of the provisional government and all military headquarters be based on Bangladesh territory. They also argued against the formation of main force battalions. Instead, they wanted all experienced military personnel to be dispersed into the districts and subdivisions of the country with orders to raise and train guerrilla brigades drawn from the peasantry. Taher had estimated that a peasant army of more than 100,000 men could be raised within a year. He argued that if this army was also a 'productive army', as many as 20 divisions could be raised and supported from the country's own resources. Stress was put on capturing enemy equipment rather than relying on foreign supplies. Only through a form of people's war, which relied upon the mass mobilization and overwhelming support of the Bengali population, could the Pakistani force, greater in numbers and with superior firepower, be overcome. People's war in their view was the only road to a military victory where Bangladeshis – not Indians – would defeat Pakistan. This group remained categorically opposed, as a result, to Indian military intervention.

Armed resistance to West Pakistan also took a third form. Civilians acting on their own initiative, without formal organization or co-ordination by any centre, took spontaneous action and organized guerrilla resistance in hundreds of places. Armed rebel groups ranged in character from those activated by Abdul Matin's East Bengal Communist Party in Pabna and the Attrai to the private armies of bandit elements such as Kader Siddiqui in the Tangail. But most groups arose spontaneously without prior organizational form and were led by the new young patriots of the Bangladesh movement. It was this last form of resistance which Taher in his testimony termed the 'natural development of the forces struggling in our Liberation War'. Officers like Taher and Ziauddin struggled within the official command structure for a policy which would stress the fullest development of the irregular forces of the Mukti Bahini. They hoped to merge their trained personnel with these new units and build up an armed force among the country's peasantry which would one day become the basis of a socialist army.

During the war, Taher commanded in two major engagements at Chilmari and Kamalpur. Both have gone down in the military history of the struggle as moments of remarkable courage and tactical skill. The campaign at Chilmari was a critical battle in breaking Pakistan's military control of North Bengal. There were several reasons for the town's significance as a target. Chilmari is a river port on the west bank of the Brahmaputra. It is also a railhead and possesses road access into the north. By utilizing it as an inland naval base, gunboats were able to range up and down the main course of the river making attacks on riverside villages and towns. Moreover, a small group of ultra-Islamic collaborators under the local Muslim League Chairman, Abu Kasim, were terrorizing sympathizers to the nationalist cause in the Chilmari area. However, Chilmari's deeper significance lay in Taher's hope to secure a liberated area in which the provisional government could establish its political headquarters inside Bangladesh. The nearby Raumari subdivision had been discussed as the best site. But in August Pakistani gunboats based in Chilmari began raiding into liberated areas of the subdivision. The strength of the Pakistani outpost at Chilmari therefore had to be destroyed.

During the month prior to the Chilmari assault a conference of sector commanders was held. Taher put forward his strategic concepts in this meeting. He opposed the formation of regular battalions and argued that all military commands be moved inside Bangladesh's borders and off Indian territory. He was supported by Ziauddin and somewhat surprisingly by Ziaur Rahman (Zia) who was commander of the Z-Force. A few years later the relationsihip between Taher and Zia, so firmly forged in this period of war, would take on great importance. Until this conference they had operated jointly in the 11th Sector. And at this important meeting Zia supported Taher's proposal on moving headquarters inside the country and moving towards a position of minimal reliance on India. However, Colonel Osmani, Major Khaled Musharraf and Major Shafiullah opposed the plan. This history of partnership between Taher and Zia made Zia's betrayal of the Twelve Demands raised during the November 7th Uprising in 1975 all the more incredible for those soldiers and Mukti Bahini elements who had backed the revolutionary objectives of the War of Independence. The radicals had regarded Zia as a committed nationalist who had avoided corruption where other officers had not. They considered him a man who might be won over to the ideology of the oppressed classes. But never did they expect he would become the rallying point of the rightist forces within the army. It was a terrible miscalculation comparable to the trust the Chinese communists had put in their alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek prior to the 1927 massacres.

Following this commanders' conference a decision was made to move the brigade commanded by Zia out of the 11th Sector where it had been jointly operating with Taher's forces. The Z-Force was shifted to operations in the Sylhet region while its main headquarters were positioned inside India at Meghalaya. Despite this sudden reduction of forces within the 11th Sector, Taher chose to proceed with the attack on Chilmari. Planning for the attack began in the middle of September (1971) at the moment Zia's forces were being shifted out. Relying mainly on newly trained recruits the Chilmari assault force moved into position in early October. On the 11th the difficult task of secretly transporting 1,200 guerilla fighters across the Brahmaputra under cover of darkness was accomplished by organizing a fleet of deep-bottomed country boats. The plan of operation called for the carrying out of simultaneous attacks at Gourgacha, Rajvita, Thanshat and the main Pakistani garrison headquartered in Chilmari's concrete-bunkered WAPDA complex. Other units were sent south of Chilmari to destroy road and railway bridges. The attack began and after bitter fighting Pakistani forces were overwhelmed. The guerrillas occupied the town for 24 hours removing vast quantities of captured arms and ammunition and taking with them a large number of prisoners. The foodstores of the Pakistan Army were opened to local villagers and two leading collaborators who commanded local Razakars [Pakistani irregulars] were captured.

After Chilmari, Taher's forces turned their main attention to Kamalpur, strategically a critical target. In Taher's view the final assault on Dacca would come from the 11th Sector after sequential attacks through Kamalpur, Jamalpur, Tangail and ultimately Dacca. The siege of Kamalpur began on October 24th. The strategy was to encircle the Pakistani garrison, wearing it down with small attacks and cutting its access to new supplies and reinforcements.

In one account of the Kamalpur battle, published in the Bengal weekly *Bichitra* and written by a journalist fighting at the time with the 11th Sector's forces, Taher's reflections on guerrilla war were summed up:

> Taher not only seemed to us an authority on political philosophy, but he was a guerrilla specialist as well. He had a very deep and extensive understanding about the history of guerrilla warfare. When holding a meeting of freedom fighters, he would often talk about this history of the guerrilla fighter. One evening he said to us, 'You are the nation's freedom fighters and you must understand the history of liberation struggles. History teaches us that weapons are not the final determinant in the success of war. Courage and the people's respect are the driving forces in war – especially guerrilla war. From today onwards forget the word "attack". In the dictionary of the guerrilla fighter there is no place for words other than raid,

> ambush and *gherao*. Be sure the enemy has no scope to find you. Search for the enemy and keep him busy. If the enemy attacks, then you turn back. If the enemy retreats, then you advance. And if the enemy breaks through your lines, you disperse and encircle him. If the enemy encircles you, then you break through his weak point with a fierce attack.' On the battlefield there was no time for speeches. But in those words Taher summed up the whole history of guerrilla struggle. That day his voice was dispassionate. There was a scientific logic to what he said and the boys tried to implement his line of thinking word for word.[33]

On November 13th after three weeks of ambushes and small-scale assaults had weakened the Pakistan garrison, Taher ordered a final full-scale attack on Kamalpur. On November 14th, as he commanded the final assault, Taher's left leg was blown off. While he was carried to the base's field hospital, Kamalpur was attacked again and finally fell into Bangladesh hands. Initially there was doubt whether Taher would live, but after several operations at the Poona Military Hospital he recovered.

Despite opposition from the dissident group within the Bengali military command, Indian forces intervened *en masse* in the conflict on December 3rd. The Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh forces, M.A.G. Osmany, and his regular Bengali brigades were virtual surrogates of the Indian High Command, as the so-called Joint Headquarters of the two nations opted for a final conventional confrontation of forces against Pakistan. More than 150,000 Indian troops began their roll towards Dacca. Completely isolated from West Pakistan and its will broken, the Army of Pakistan collapsed and surrendered on the 16th of December. The first forces to reach the Dacca Command Headquarters of the Pakistan Army were those of the 11th Sector. Taher's brother, Abu Yusuf Khan, plucked the flag from General Niazi's (Pakistan's C-in-C Eastern Command) staff car as a prized symbol of the 11th Sector's last attack.

The Conquest of Independence

On the surface the intervention of Indian forces into the conflict was not an unpopular development. The terror spread by the Pakistani Army had been unrelenting and people were genuinely glad to be free of it. As Indian soldiers arrived in Dacca and other towns, they were cheered. The defeat of the Pakistani forces had been accomplished and this was itself a great achievement both for Bengalis and Indians – albeit for very different reasons. And in the process of the war an object deeper than the religious bitterness which had originally separated the sub-continent appeared to have been won.

However, while haloed portraits of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi adorned homes and hung from tea shops all across a newly independent Bangladesh, the small incidents which would ultimately turn friendship into animosity had already begun. As Indian forces captured Pakistani supply depots, Indian commanders immediately began ordering the removal of a vast quantity of captured arms and ammunition. Four divisions' worth of captured equipment was packed up and shipped across the border into India. Bangladesh commanders who objected were ignored. At the lower levels it was not so easy. In Khulna District under the 9th Sector Command of a Bangladesh officer, Major M.A. Jalil, a direct confrontation occurred. Jalil objected to the movement of captured weapons into India. Under Indian pressure Bangladesh's provisional government arrested him for insubordination and ordered him to be courtmartialed. Upon his release from prison a year later, following a trial which exonerated him, Jalil became the figurehead President of the Socialist National Party (J.S.D.).

In Jessore and other districts actual fighting broke out at several places between Mukti Bahini irregulars and Indian troops attempting to remove captured equipment across the border. The Bengalis said that captured material was Bangladesh property and not Indian war booty.

At the Chittagong Naval Base Indian units removed every last piece of movable equipment from typewriters and ceiling fans to the silverware in the Officers' Mess – only the Admiral's desk was left untouched. And while, in all fairness, it must be noted that a number of Indian officers were ultimately courtmartialed for looting, the mass removal of captured weapons was a careful policy decision made by India. New Delhi was determined to prevent sophisticated weaponry from falling into the hands, either of Bangladesh's politically leftist guerilla forces, or for it to become the basis of a well equipped national army on India's eastern flank. India had fought this war to neutralize its eastern front and it now made this clear to the Bengalis. They would be allowed second-hand vintage weaponry from Indian stocks for purposes of internal security and no more.

But the first insult came even earlier. According to Taher's military colleagues, it was a matter he often referred to in private. The conquest of the Pakistani Army was symbolized by the moment of defeat when in a dramatic ceremony the Pakistani Commander, General Niazi, signed the declaration of surrender. Niazi surrendered to the *Indian* Commander, General Aurora Singh. No Bangladesh officer was in attendance. Taher often said that Osmany, Zia and other Bangladesh military men had failed the country by depriving the Bangladesh forces of this moment of history. Taher had been wounded during the Kamalpur assault, a month prior to the war's end, but units under his command in the 11th Sector were among the first to enter Dacca on the 16th of December. He would later claim that, had he not lost his leg at Kamalpur and been in Dacca on the 16th, Niazi would then have had to surrender to a Bengali and not an Indian.

In April 1972 Taher returned to Bangladesh after further surgery on his amputated leg. He was appointed Adjutant-General of the Bangladesh Army and while in this post began proceedings against a number of senior officers – most notably Shafiullah and Mir Sawkat Ali – for their illegal acquisition of property during the war. Outside the army many senior officials of the Awami League had begun to acquire the 'abandoned property' of West

Pakistanis who had fled or who had allegedly collaborated with the Pakistani Army. Among a small section of the military the looting spirit had also developed and Taher was determined to stop the rot in the troops under his command. 'My position,' he told the Tribunal, 'was that everything any officer had illegally acquired must be returned.'

Within a few months Taher took command of the 44th Brigade at Comilla. His close friend Ziauddin, with whom he had escaped from Pakistan, took charge of the most important command in the country: the Dacca Brigade. Both Taher and Ziauddin in their respective units began immediate measures against corruption. Taher ordered all officers under his command to surrender any property they had acquired illegally during or after the Liberation War. In a dramatic gesture in front of the Dacca Brigade's Signal Corps Ziauddin built a vast bonfire of the loot handed in by officers and sepoys. As the entire brigade stood to attention, television sets, refrigerators and radios went up in flames. 'I had a set of officers whose consciences were completely clear,' Taher told the tribunal, 'This is what I regarded as leadership. I always sought to appeal to what was good in men. I detested and avoided taking advantage of the weakness of an individual.'

Differences which had previously existed over questions of war strategy took a new form in the post-independence period. Attempts to restore and rebuild an army in Bangladesh in accordance with the traditional concepts, practices and colonial pattern of a conventional army began. At the command level Taher and Ziauddin actively opposed such measures. They argued that, in a poor and backward country like Bangladesh, only two choices existed for an army that adopted a conventional pattern. If the Army remained simply the defence and security force of the state, as it had always been, then in a poor nation the armed forces could only exist as a great economic burden, drawing off the small economic surplus necessary for investment and expanded production. Either that or such an army must ultimately compromise national independence and become dependent on foreign military assistance or imperialist loans.

During its twenty year history of association with the United States under a series of mutual security agreements, the Pakistan Army had grown to an enormous size. In 1958 this sacred cow of the Pakistani state and child of American aid pushed aside the nascent parliamentary institutions and imposed an era of military dictatorship. It annually consumed close to 60% of the nation's revenue. The expansion was financed by draining the domestic economic surplus and by becoming one piece in the complex puzzle of American military alliances. In return for Pakistan's loyalty to both CENTO and SEATO, the United States was willing to provide a billion dollars in military assistance.

It was precisely this type of development which Taher and Ziauddin wished to avoid. They proposed, therefore, a policy of self-reliance. Soldiers would not only carry a gun, but would also work like peasants and workers. All brigades were to raise their own food and begin productive work in villages near their camps. During the summer of 1972, at a Brigade Commanders' meeting held in Dacca, units made their final proposals for the designs which would become brigade insignias. It was at this meeting, when Taher was asked what the symbol of the Comilla Brigade would be, that he reportedly pushed a design of a plough across the conference table. From then onwards the men of the Comilla Brigade were called the 'plough soldiers'. In Comilla itself soldiers began intensive cultivation of crops and organized a plantation of several hundred thousand pineapples. All officers and men were required to do physical labour every day. Special work teams were organized to visit villages and identify fallow land which the army offered to help plough and plant. Irrigation and flood control works were also identified by army engineers. Taher called it the 'productive army'. But three years later the euphemism would be dropped when, in the language of the November 7th Uprising, the rebelling soldiers would call for a 'People's Army: an armed force of the oppressed classes'.

The new modes of military organization which had been advanced by Taher and Ziauddin were not to last. By late in the summer of 1972 Ziauddin, in particular, had become deeply disillusioned over the political direction of the country. In a signed article in the opposition weekly, *Holiday*, he openly stated his views:

> Independence has become an agony for the people of this country. Stand on the street and you see purposeless, spiritless, lifeless faces going through the mechanics of life. Generally, after a liberation war, the 'new spirit' carries through and the country builds itself out of nothing. In Bangladesh the story is simply the other way round. The whole of Bangladesh is either begging or singing sad songs or shouting without awareness. The hungry and poor are totally lost. This country is on the verge of falling into the abyss.

Ziauddin also argued that there had been a 'betrayal' of the national struggle because a 'secret treaty' had been signed with India. He called for a full public disclosure of the terms of this agreement. He then concluded with a harsh statement against the Prime Minister, Mujibur Rahman. Referring to Mujib, who had spent nine months of the war in a Pakistani prison, Ziauddin wrote: 'We fought without him and won. And now if need be we will fight again.'[34]

For the Commander of the Dacca Brigade Ziauddin's article was hardly an act of soldierly obedience. It was published while Mujib was out of the country. When he returned, the Prime Minister met Ziauddin and assured him there would be no formal recriminations, if he offered an official apology. Ziauddin refused and late in 1972 he was dismissed from army service. Taher and others who had supported him were also 'released' from active duty.

Throughout 1972-73 radical elements in the state administration and army structure who had opposed foreign aid and argued for an austere and self-reliant approach toward reconstruction were being purged. Within a few months of Ziauddin's dismissal from the Army, others who held similar views were finding themselves in an untenable position. Dr. Anisur Rahman of Bangladesh's Planning Commission, writing in *The Business Review* of Dacca, reflected on the dilemma of the period:

> On the morrow of the liberation, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh had announced its intention not to accept aid from any country which had been hostile to its liberation struggle, no matter what this policy would cost the nation. This was a very exciting decision. If followed, this would have meant no U.S. aid for Bangladesh, and thus the biggest single supply source of foreign aid would have been cut off . . . the nation would have been forced to adopt a more austere reconstruction and development policy than it has followed . . . such a highly respectable and courageous policy, if faithfully followed, would have raised the prestige of Bangladesh as a nation . . . Besides, a government which could sustain such a challenging attitude to foreign aid, would certainly have adopted equally bold distribution policies at home, so that the suffering from whatever post-liberation shortages there would have existed, would have been widely shared and hence much better tolerated. Dedicated patriots who had taken active participation in the liberation war under trying circumstances, people's committees and vigilance squads would naturally have featured prominently in the distribution system. In short, institutions would have changed, and with it the very social landscape of the nation.
>
> But all this is fantasy. The radicals in the government did attempt a policy coup. The radical aid policy was followed by the one thousand taka ceiling on salaries which for a time stunned the high salaried class. But the right-wing regrouped fast and the 'counter-revolution' was swift and decisive. Powerful right-wing pressure soon changed the aid policy and the door was thrown open to any donor who would now pose as a friend irrespective of past conduct; the salary ceiling was raised to two thousand taka plus a car to be run and maintained at the public expense. All other pronouncements about austerity and egalitarianism were reduced to empty slogans. By now, the country has firmly entered into a course of heavy indebtedness, particularly to the very country [USA] which had wanted the destruction of Bangladesh as a nation . . . .[35]

As this commentary indicates, the beginning of the Awami League's decline had set in within the first year of independence. The idealism and enthusiasm which the party had inspired in its struggle against Pakistan's military dictatorship was being drowned in a sea of corruption. And the corruption was funded principally by nearly $2 billion dollars' worth of relief commodities, aid, contracts and international business which poured in from the bountiful overseas cornucopia following independence. While the bribe, the kickback and the payoff had all previously existed in the familiar form known as *bakhsheesh*, what was new was the extraordinary sums now involved. In two and a half years the regime in Dacca received more aid than it had received in its previous 23 years as the province in East Pakistan. Talk of 'black money' and stories of illicit trade deals became part of the dark new folklore of the post-independence period.

Prior to independence East Bengal had been a rather quiet distant place – the most remote province of Pakistan. Travellers journeying from Southeast to South Asia via Bangkok, Rangoon and Calcutta invariably skipped Dacca. There were few international flights into the city and after 1965 there were no flights via Calcutta, now the main transit point for Bangladesh. Civil war and independence suddenly catapulted Bangladesh from a backwater on the periphery of the world market into a nation with increasing strategic importance.

Radical critics, who found themselves being shunted out of the army and the important ministries, charged that foreign aid had become the prime source for the criminalization of the country's politics and the destruction of the idealism which had emerged from the period of the guerrilla war. 'This was, of course, only to be expected,' wrote Anisur Rahman on the eve of his departure from the Planning Commission, 'The revolution that liberated Bangladesh was a national bourgeois revolution. There was nothing in the class character of the leadership to expect any commitment of self-imposed hardship in pursuance of ideological goals.'[36]

The most notorious example of the style of primitive accumulation indulged in by members of the new regime was that of Gazi Gulam Mustafa, President of Dacca City's Awami League and Chairman of Bangladesh's Red Cross Society. Mustafa established a multi-million dollar black market operation in relief goods which became the principal financial source for party financing. At one stage the Director of the United Nations Relief Operation in Bangladesh (UNROB) observed that it had become so bad that only about one in seven tins of baby food and one in thirteen blankets donated to relief ever reached the poor. Besides John Stonehouse, the British Labour Party M.P. whose illicit dealings ultimately put him behind bars, a number of other foreigners became enterprising soldiers of fortune in the midst of misery. One European official from the United Nations' transport division, which at one point controlled the import and shipment of millions of dollars' worth of goods into the country, was himself reported to have made over a million dollars and to have purchased a hotel in Sardinia from his Bangladesh earnings.[37] In 1974 the World Bank, that leading light of international lending, became enmeshed in a scandal involving its northwest irrigation project, when it was revealed that the Bank had knowingly paid $4 million in bribes.[38]

It was in this situation that the Awami League's most militant supporters from 1970 turned into its most active opposition. By late 1974 government officials were openly admitting that more than 3,000 Awami League officials had been assassinated, either through intra-party rivalry or by various underground groups. Open forms of insurgency were developing in certain sections of the country. Among the most active of the armed groups was Siraj Sikdar's Purba Bangla Sharbohara Party (East Bengal Proletarian Party), also known as the East Bengal Workers' Movement (E.B.W.M.). Prior to independence it had existed as a group of young communists committed to the thesis that the main contradiction in Pakistan was a conflict between the ruling class of West

Pakistan and the exploited masses of East Pakistan. The E.B.W.M. said that revolution in East Pakistan had to take the form of a revolution for national independence. By denying this, it said, other so-called pro-Peking groups were denying the main political contradiction of Pakistan. After having taken an active role in the independence struggle the Sharbohara Party reorganized its guerrilla squads. Following independence it identified the Mujib government as its main enemy, and gradually built up a campaign of assaults on police outposts across the country.

In the spring of 1974 the Sharbohara Party and the Marxist underground in general received an unusual recruit. In May of that year leaflets appeared in Dacca's main military cantonment and in other sections of the city, announcing that Lt. Colonel M. Ziauddin, the former commander of the Dacca Brigade, had joined Sikdar's East Bengal Proletarian Party. After his dismissal from the Army Ziauddin began to get to know a side of Bangladesh his upper class education had led him away from. Before the war he had been more conversant in English or Urdu than Bengali. Now he turned in a new direction. For half a year he rode the rails of Bangladesh in third class train compartments visiting rural areas and making efforts to change his old personal habits in order to declass himself. When he came to Dacca, as he frequently did, Ziauddin would often stay with Taher's family in Narayanganj on the outskirts of the city. He borrowed books from new found leftist friends outside the Army and tried to learn something of the classics of Marxism.

In February 1974 Ziauddin's closest friends suddenly lost touch with him. He had disappeared. But at the end of the month, a friend received a one-sentence letter from the former Commander of the Dacca Brigade. It read: 'I have crossed the line.' Nothing more was heard until May, when the leaflet under his signature appeared throughout Dacca, announcing he had joined the Marxist underground.

Over the same period parallel and important developments were taking place within the Awami League itself. In 1972 the two trends which had existed in the League for nearly a decade began to fall out. Ten years earlier in 1962 a nucleus of young men had joined the League with the conscious notion of advancing the socialist cause by mobilizing a multi-class struggle for national independence, through the vehicle of the Awami League. They had fully expected that at a certain stage they would have to break off and establish an independent position. The day Mujib returned to Bangladesh from prison in Pakistan, January 10th 1972, this nucleus began publication of their Bengali mouthpiece *Gonokontho (Voice of the People).* Over the next two years, before its offices were burned and ransacked and its editor arrested, the paper would achieve a daily circulation second only to the leading and traditional Bengali daily *Ittefaq*.

Mujib returned to mass acclaim in Dacca. But on arrival he was immediately approached by the same leaders of the Students' League who, a year earlier, had pressed him into declaring an independent Bangladesh. They outlined their proposals for a vigorous programme of nationalization, co-operatives, agrarian reform and post-war reconstruction. They called upon the Awami League to adopt a specific programme for the transition to socialism. They also proposed the formation of a government of national unity including all parties (not just the League) which had fought against Pakistan. Mujib rejected this and other proposals. Instead, imbued with his own apparent popularity and new found international image, he advanced his own vague ideological package called *The Four Pillars of Mujibism (The Mujibad)*: Nationalism, Secularism, Socialism and Democracy. To his militant supporters of 1970 Mujib's new programme was simply an empty pot to be filled with the fruits of a foreign aid bonanza, not the ideals of the independence struggle. For the militants the time for a complete break had come.

In April 1972, four months after Mujib's return and at the peak of his popularity, the left nucleus broke the Students' League in half. The following month, in May, they divided the peasant federation, the Jatyo Krishak League. In June, they split the workers' front, breaking up the Shramik League and forming their own parallel organization. On October 21st a Convening Committee of the Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (J.S.D./Socialist National Party) was founded, not calling itself a party, but a 'socialist mass organization'. Among those who made up the committee were Bidan Krishna Sen, Shajahan Siraj, Nur Alam Ziku, Abdur Rab, Sultan Uddin Ahmed and Major M.A. Jalil. In December the Convening Committee of the J.S.D. was expanded into the Central Organizing Committee of the J.S.D. It included a number of important, but secret members such as Colonel Abu Taher. In May of 1973 the Central Organizing Committee expanded further into a National Committee of the J.S.D.

In June of 1974, following an extended meeting of the National Committee, a smaller Co-ordination Committee was formed, and at this session the 1962 nucleus, known as the Bangladesh Biplopi Kendra (Revolutionary Centre of Bangladesh), officially dissolved itself, merging into the Co-ordination Committee of the J.S.D. During the June '74 session, a draft thesis and a draft constitution for a revolutionary party were put forward. The document had been drawn up by a committee which, among others, included Sirajul Alam Khan, Hasanul Huq Inu and Harunur Rashid. No party, however, was officially formed. The National Committee held the position that they were in the process of forming a revolutionary party. No party could officially be formed until a national congress could be held. The National Committee considered that the overall development of the movement in Bangladesh had not yet reached such a stage, although they thought it was close. Members were directed to start forming nuclei at the district and lower levels where the draft thesis would be discussed and Marxist-Leninist principles were to be propagated to a wider and wider circle. In April '74 the National Committee began publication of the party's theoretical journal *Samyabad* (*Communism*) and at the end of that year they began issuing *Larai* (*Struggle*), as the organ of the 'democratic movement' supported by the J.S.D. In July the J.S.D. officially founded its armed wing called the Biplopi Gono Bahini (People's Revolutionary Army), commanded by a still anonymous Colonel Abu Taher.

In the country as a whole, stability was deteriorating further as the economic situation stumbled from disarray to disaster. The period 1973-74, followin the war in the Middle East, was a time of grave crisis on international commodity markets. The world price explosion in food grains and oil occurred simultaneously with a period of deep internal crisis within Bangladesh. Both combined in such a way that the country was driven into the agony of the worst famine since 1943. But the ineptness, arrogance and profiteering with which Mujib's Awami League administration approached impending developments only compounded the famine's existing man-made dimensions.

Three reports filed by this writer in the summer and fall of 1974 will give some sense of the situation at the level of national administration, and its subsequent consequences in the countryside.

> *August 1974:* Inflation of over 40% has decimated real income and brought enormous hardship to families whose margins for survival disappeared years ago. The Government's cost-of-living index for industrial workers in the Dacca-Narayanganj area reached 325.45 in May (1969-70 = 100). The price index for workers' clothing rose to 514. In Chittagong and several other district towns the situation is even worse.
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> Should monetary expansion be viewed as a reason of equal or greater cause for spiralling prices, then, logically, not only would smugglers and hoarders be lined up before the firing squad, but so would government officials responsible for monetary policy.
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> One need not be a follower of Milton Friedman in order to believe that an extraordinary expansion in Bangladesh's money supply, during a period when the economy had not yet recovered to 1970 production levels, is one very substantial cause of the country's rampaging inflation. Official statistics published by the Bangladesh Bank state that, at the time of independence in December 1971, money supply (currency in circulation and demand deposits) stood at Ta 3,880 million. At the end of June 1974, the Planning Commission put the money supply at Ta 8,400 million, or a 116% increase in just two and a half years. Since 1969-70, the period used as a 'benchmark' level for productive recovery, it has been at least 200%.
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> The Government's monetary policy has served to finance enormous and unplanned budgetary deficits. In the first year and a half, the large-scale influx of relief commodities hid the inflationary power of the growing money supply, as increased currency matched an increasing supply of relief commodities. However, since relief goods did not represent real additions to production and production itself did not increase to match monetary growth, the dragon of inflation was let loose when the flow of relief goods began to ebb . . . .
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> The poverty and increasing unemployment in the country's 65,000 villages have, if anything, become even worse since independence. 46 million people out of a total population of 74 million are living below the poverty line. These are people who do not earn enough to consume 2,100 calories a day. They are mainly landless peasants and small farmers. Of a rural population of 66 million in 1970, roughly 40%, or 26 million people, were landless. Real wages for these agricultural labourers have fallen despite a modest rise during the days of East Pakistan. In 1949,

agricultural workers earned Ta 697 per annum (with 1966 taken as the base), in 1961 Ta 733, in 1964 Ta 852, and in 1969 Ta 834. By 1973, however, the real income of agricultural workers was Ta 580. In short, the landless peasants of Bangladesh were earning 17% less in 1973 than in 1949. ('A State of Siege', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 30 August 1974).

October 1974: In the first three days of October, nineteen 'official' starvation deaths in Dacca City were reported, but the actual number is believed to be much greater. A chain of stories from the districts are linking the deteriorating situation in the rural areas with a complacency in the capital that has been born of months of rising prices and hardened by political disillusionment. Medical workers in Faridpur report villagers refusing inoculations, declaring that they would prefer to die quickly from disease rather than slowly from hunger. And in Saidpur there have been numerous stories of suicides in Bihari camps, where starvation has been endemic for more than a year . . . .

All the preliminary signs of a major famine have been unfolding for weeks. Large numbers of peasants wandering into the towns, the reports of starvation deaths, and now a decision by Dacca to open gruel kitchens in the districts, are confirmation. The situation is expected to get much worse, mainly because the authorities are unlikely to take effective action on food prices. The phenomenal rise in the price of rice over the past half-year is the main factor in the starvation now overwhelming the ranks of the poorer classes – the harvesters of months of profiteering, speculation and corruption in the nation's grain trade. The markets are full of grain – at a price.

As the famine intensifies, there will continue to be substantial supplies of grain available from private stocks, but at an increasingly higher price. During the great Bengal Famine of 1943, a number of famous families made their fortunes in the merchant grain trade. It is widely believed in Dacca that many fortunes are being made in the current situation. Referring to profiteering, one high U.N. official in Dacca has said: 'What is coming up will be a man-made famine.'

During the third week in September the price of rice suddenly rocketed to nearly Ta 400 (US $30.77) per maund (35 kg.), or ten times the pre-independence level of three years ago. The increase would be the equivalent of an American family paying $4 for a loaf of bread they bought at 40 cents three years back. (*Ibid*., 25 October 1974).

November 1974: Rangpur District. Northern Bangladesh. It appears the entire year has been a period of preparation for a dreadful holocaust of hunger; awaited, dreaded and yet, like the certainty of a rising wave, a tragedy reminiscent of Bengal's 1943 famine appears to be being re-enacted with all the attendant horror and indifference. For those who have soberly observed the Bangladesh economy and administration, this last terrible descent comes as no surprise.

Rangpur District in northern Bengal has been most seriously affected, although advanced starvation has become apparent in other areas, particularly Jamalpur in western Mymensingh and parts of Faridpur, Noakhali and Khulna. It is Rangpur, however, which has become the nation's central death trap.

> On October 24 the Rangpur Treasury was a setting of frenzy, reminiscent of the run-on-the-bank scenes in Europe and America during the 1920s and 1930s, as thousands of people jammed and fought their way through the office to procure the official stamp to attach to the transfer of land deeds. By early October, small holders had gone through all their cash, and so came the last desperate throw – an all-out effort to sell land for money to buy rice.
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> Treasury officials said they could not recall such a massive transfer of land ownership in the district, estimating that more than 100,000 acres of land have been sold in the past three months at half their normal price. A bigha of land (third of an acre) which sold at Taka 2,000 six months ago, is now fetching only Taka 1,000. So the peasants are losing out in two directions, with land prices plummeting and rice costs rocketing. In Rangpur rice is selling at Taka 400 a maund (77 lbs), but only three years ago the price was one-tenth of today's level, and six months ago it was half as much. District officials conservatively estimate that between 15,000 and 25,000 people have died in the Rangpur area during the past three months. According to a medical officer, the cause is 'absolute starvation' and not from the famous so-called ailment of malnutrition.
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> Certain officials speaking very much off the record, claim closer to 50,000 people have died. The local unit of the opposition J.S.D. claims 100,000 people have perished. Whatever the true figures, all sides admit that, with the onset of cold weather and the lack of any major relief effort, the number of victims will roughly treble before the famine is over.
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> Rangpur officials have agreed privately that one death per village per week was a fair, if not low, estimate. That means if even half the 4,000 villages of the district were free from starvation, which they are not, at least 2,000 people would be dying each week. When projected to the rest of the country's nineteen districts, although they are not in such a serious position as Rangpur, the magnitude can only be calculated in the realms of the imagination reserved for the appalling. ('A Death Trap Called Rangpur', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 15 November 1974).

The year of the famine became the pivot of Mujib's decline. Where in 1971 as the unchallenged leader of the nationalist movement, Mujib had spoken to crowds of more than a million, in 1974 he rarely ventured out to address an open meeting. Disturbances were too likely. In December 1973 the J.S.D. was already holding mass rallies of crowds up to 100,000 on Dacca's Paltan Maidan. In January and February 1974 it led two successful nationwide general strikes. Then, on March 17, after a large meeting on the Paltan Maidan, J.S.D. leaders led a hunger march on the Home Minister's residence. As they reached the Minister's house, units of the Rakkhi Bahini, a special paramilitary force trained under Indian Government auspices, arrived. Within moments they opened fire and the procession ended in the Minto Road Massacre.[39] An official announcement confirmed eight deaths while doctors at Dacca Medical College spoke of more than 30. Following this incident many J.S.D. leaders were arrested, the party's offices were ransacked, and the premises of

Gonokontho, the J.S.D. paper, were burned down and its editor arrested. The party was forced underground.

But by now two of the most active revolutionary groups in the country had senior and experienced military personalities within their ranks. That Ziauddin had joined Siraj Sikdar's Sharbohara Party was widely known from the party's leaflets. Taher's membership in the J.S.D., however, was a closely guarded party secret and known by very few. During this period Taher moved openly in Dacca and stayed in contact with military colleagues. As individuals, Taher and Ziauddin remained intimate friends. Although Ziauddin was now a hunted man, they continued to stay in close touch. Ziauddin had been drawn to the Sharbohara Party because it was the militarily most active form of opposition to a regime he believed had betrayed the Liberation War. While Taher had ultimately hoped for unity among these various underground groups, he considered Sikdar's movement to be lacking in a mass base and a comprehensive programme of political and social analysis. The J.S.D., however, he regarded as being in the process of building up both a base and a political programme capable of becoming the foundation of a revolutionary socialist government. In the Sharbohara Party the gun seemed to command the party rather than the opposite. As a leading though secret figure in the J.S.D.'s armed force – the Biplopi Gono Bahini – Taher considered himself under the political direction of the National Committee.

During 1974 revolutionary parties such as Sikdar's Sharbohara Party were stepping up their armed assaults on local police outposts. In famine areas there were stories of rebels breaking open government food warehouses and distributing the stocks to the hungry. In December 1974 Mujib put the country under Emergency rule, suspending the Constitution and moving towards declaring himself President. The crackdown on underground parties intensified. At the end of the month Siraj Sikdar was captured by a police dragnet in Chittagong. Within days of his arrest he was shot in the back while 'trying to escape'. There was little doubt among most observers in Dacca that Sikdar had been murdered in police custody. An explosive situation was developing. Within six months Sheik Mujibur Rahman would be dead.

Zia's November 23rd Counter-Coup: Taher's Arrest

This account opened with an execution. There followed a letter written by Taher just before his death in which he appealed to those who attended the secret sessions of Military Tribunal No. 1 to 'expose the secret behind this trial . . . to expose the truth'. For the present the truth on this case is banned in Bangladesh. Those responsible for Taher's execution in 1976 and the hundreds of hangings which followed a year later, would prefer for the whole story to be forgotten, and that any memory of the November Uprising should die shrouded in the same secrecy they imposed upon Taher's trial. The object of this text is to make that impossible.

What follows makes no claim to cover the whole matter. There is much more to be written, other details to be unearthed, further statements to be made. It is my hope that these will come from Bengali writers and that my comments will only be the first crack in the shell of secrecy encasing this and other cases of the Special Military Tribunals.

Furthermore, even in this present account there are more details to be set out before it can be considered closed. Many dates have been touched upon – August 15th, November 3rd, November 7th – but the full sequence is not complete. The year 1974 was the year of Bangladesh's 'revolutionary left'. From the J.S.D. and the Sharbohara Party to Maulana Bhashani and Toaha's Samyabadi Dal, they collectively developed and expressed the rising public antagonism to Mujib's corrupt and faltering regime. But, while it was the left which through open agitation and underground action had assiduously prepared the ground for popular revolt, when the moment came it was the right which struck. The night (August 15th) that Mujib and some forty members of his family died, Bangladesh and the world woke up to a story of six army majors, and the soldiers immediately under their command, having been the ones that pulled the trigger. For the country they offered up little more than the extreme right wing of Mujib's own Awami League in the figure of Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed. Ideologically they proposed a throwback to the old Pakistan formula of Allah being the pillar of the state and America the financial and military underpin. China's antagonism to Soviet-backed Indian expansionism could also be drawn upon, as Ayub Khan had once done to frighten off New Delhi's overbearing proclivities. But most importantly, the general impression had successfully been spread that the six majors had acted alone and unilaterally. However, as with much else, even this well-constructed illusion is in the process of being unravelled, as will become clear in Part Two of this book.

Having examined the underlying questions of political theory and history which characterized these violent events, it is possible to return to the account of Taher's life with which this essay began. Following the violent insurrectionary morning of November 7th, Taher and Ziaur Rahman met as if they were once again old comrades, fighting in the 11th Sector. By several accounts of the moment. Zia emotionally embraced Taher as he entered the compound, expressing his deepest gratitude for the event which had saved him. Only four days previously the two men had been cut off in mid-conversation as Zia, on the verge of being arrested, telephoned Taher hoping he might rally forces opposed to Khaled Musharraf's putsch.

Immediately after Khaled's takeover, enormous tensions began to develop within the rank and file of the armed forces. N.C.O.s and J.C.O.s converged on Taher's residence in Narayanganj, appealing for leadership and action. A number of these officers and men were members of the Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization (Biplopi Sainik Sangstha) which the J.S.D. had anonymously been organizing for more than a year. They had been planning their own general uprising against Mujib at the time of his assassination. But they opposed putsches and coups. Their plan had been to deepen mass urban and peasant agitations before moving on the military front. But the military putsches of August and November had created a new situation. The J.S.D. chose to back an uprising which they judged would have massive spontaneous support and, if successful, would break open the straitjacket around the country's political life. Under Taher's leadership it activated the military organization and set the wheel of the rebellion in motion.

According to the J.S.D.'s journal *Samaybad*, their organizations acted for the following reasons:

> When Khaled Musharraf and his faction came to power, they immediately engaged themselves in bringing about an increase in Indo-Soviet political dominance over the country. The Awami League and its tail – the parties of the Moni-Muzzafar circle – came out openly and made all efforts to re-establish the image of Sheikh Mujib. However, by then, the armed forces, in particular the *jawans* of the army, became disillusioned and agitated by the coups, the power struggles of their officers, and the way the sepoys were being used as tools only to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie Their sentiments were expressed in the leaflets issued by the Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization (Biplopi Shainik Sangsha) and distributed in the Dacca Cantonment on November 5th 1975. On the night of November 6th, the revolutionary membership of the organization in direct communication with the People's Revolutionary Army (Biplopi Gono Bahini) took a firm decision to come out of the barracks and bring about the final downfall of the Khaled Musharraf group.
>
> Khaled Musharraf's faction was completely defeated through the uprising of the sepoys – initiated by a joint organization of the Revolutionary Forces and the People's Revolutionary Army – thus giving them their first victory over the reactionaries. The decision to act was taken:
>
> First: to shatter the unity of the most active, organized and oppressive armed group of the bourgeois state machinery.
>
> Second: to minimize the organizing capacities of the bourgeoisie.
>
> Third: to weaken the imperialist, revisionist and hegemonist forces which are the patrons of the national bourgeoisie.
>
> Fourth: to force the new rule to bring back a democratic situation as far as possible with a view to ultimately eliminating the elements of bourgeois democracy.
>
> Fifth: to prepare the ground for an introduction and growth of proletarian state power and political forces parallel to the bourgeois system of state power.
>
> The full extent of our participation and achievements in the events of November 7th and after, including our assessment and review of this matter, have been published in the booklets *Lorai* (*Struggle*, fifth issue) and *Jangi Janatar Gikya Gore Tulun* (*Forge Militant Mass Unity*).[40]

Unlike some interpretations of their activity, the J.S.D. on November 7th did not consider itself to be out to establish a revolutionary government. Their objective was more modest. They hoped first of all to secure a general release of political prisoners detained during Mujib's regime and still held throughout the months of Mustaque's period in power. A large number of political prisoners, mainly of radical political groups, were under detention. The J.S.D. had 10,000 members, including a number of National Committee members, in prison. They proposed, on the 7th, the establishment of an interim government that would include all parties which had suffered repression during Mujib's regime and which had supported the independence struggle of the country. Religious communal parties, such as the Muslim League and the Jamat-e-Islami, which actively collaborated with the Pakistan Army, were to remain banned. The J.S.D. called for such a government to hold fresh elections, restore press freedom and allow open political meetings. Within the army, the urban work force and in the rural areas, they called for the setting up of new organs of authority in the form of soldiers' committees, thus by-passing the state bureaucracy as the source of authority. What they seemed to hope for was a Kerensky style interim regime during which 1917 style soldiers' and workers' soviets would be set up. New opportunities would open for consolidation and the building up of bases before a new crisis would either project their movement into power or drive it underground.

In the aftermath of the subsequent crackdown on the party, the J.S.D.'s decision to back Ziaur Rahman on the morning of the uprising has remained a point of deep puzzlement. It appears that Taher was influential in this tactical choice. He believed, as did others, that Zia, while not a radical, would at least favour immediate democratic measures such as a general amnesty, freeing of the press, and elections. They believed that at least he would not actively oppose these steps. Taher and Zia had been close personal friends for years. After independence it was Taher and Ziauddin, more than any other officers, who had built up Zia's popularity among the sepoys, as an honest nationalist. When Ziauddin had gone underground with the Sharbohara Party, Zia had discouraged junior officers from pursuing the chase too vigorously. In '72 he had given quiet support within the High Command to Taher's deployment of a 'productive army' unit at Comilla. So, on the 7th, there was some basis upon which to expect his co-operation. On the evening of the mutiny Zia went and joined Taher at Bangladesh Radio. There Zia signed a document committing himself to the support of the Twelve Demands. Next day Zia ordered the release of the J.S.D. leadership from prison. Their President, Major M.A. Jalil, and the party's General Secretary, A.S.M. Abdur Rab, were freed. Permission was given for a public meeting at the central Baikal Mukarram on the 9th.

It was then that trouble developed. Police showed up at the Mukarram and broke up the J.S.D. procession.[41] The J.S.D. student leader, A.F.M. Mahbubul Huq, President of the Chattra League, was shot and wounded by police. While Zia at first wavered and even initially indicated tacit backing of the radical left inside the army, he soon completely reversed his stance. The aid for which he had appealed to Taher on the night of November 3rd had come in a form he had never imagined. While he had hoped for the overthrow of Khaled's putsch, he now suddenly found himself besieged by solders' committees calling for a classless army without officers.

Forces fundamentally antagonistic to the radical dimensions of the upsurge rapidly tried to re-establish their position. Mabub Alam Chashi, an important behind-the-scenes figure in the coup which toppled Mujib, reportedly was able to persuade Zia onto a new course. Basing its strength on the institutions of the American-trained national police, particularly the Special Combat paramilitary police units and the National Security Intelligence (N.S.I.) agency of the country, the right formed up its ranks.

A J.S.D. document analysing the events described Zia's role in the following way:

> Knowing full well that Major-General Zia was an ambitious man and lacked a progressive personality, he was nevertheless put in power mainly because the prevailing situation called for the upholding of national unity. By placing at the top a seemingly non-political man like Zia, whom the people in general and the army would support, this could be achieved. In addition, the weak position he was in due to having been saved from certain death presented an opportunity to utilize him for the cause of working people's politics. He would be used, if possible, for the release of political prisoners, the staging of a free early election, the formation of an interim national government, liberating the country from the Indo-Soviet-US influence, and such other activities conducive to the revolutionary movement.
>
> But shortly after having been put in such a powerful position, Zia realized that his personal class-based hopes and ambitions would not be materialized if he remained under the influence of progressive forces . . . . By 10-11 November 1975 he assumed a full reactionary role. Despite whatever correct statements he put forward at the outset, Zia right from the start moved towards the reactionary camp.[42]

By November 15th the J.S.D. had publicly begun to disassociate itself from Zia, after he refused to order further prisoner releases and continued a ban on open political meetings. Newly issued leaflets sponsored by the J.S.D. charged that Zia, who had been freed by the revolutionary *jawans*, was being led in a counter-revolutionary direction by 'the rightist reactionaries and pro-USA elements'.[43]

A parallel might be made here to events in Portugal during 1974-75, when the radical Armed Forces Movement (M.F.A.) overthrew Portuguese fascism. Although the radicals in the army led by Otelo Carvalho had been the ones to stage the April uprising, they temporarily aligned with more conservative elements led by General Spinola. Both groups initially agreed that the establishment of democratic rights and the dismantling of the fascist state were the first tasks of the democratic revolution. But this unity was soon to be broken and Spinola emerged as the new symbol and rallying point of the Portugese right. 'Although Spinola could agree in principle to the Armed Forces Movement's programme', noted one observer, 'the interpretation of that programme was another matter. The M.F.A. wanted much more than the shifting of a few ministers while the structures that had supported and sustained them for almost fifty years remain intact.'[44] In Portugal, however, eleven months elapsed between the radical dynamic of the April '74 revolt and Spinola's attempted coup d'etat on March 11, 1975. It was a crucial period in which, under conditions of open politics, the M.F.A. was able to create mass organizations and organize a broad base of support. Spinola's putsch failed. In Bangladesh the crisis was vastly telescoped in time, and where his Portuguese counterpart had taken months to end his surface equivocation with revolutionary politics and make his stand on the right wing absolutely clear, General Zia, the Spinola of Bangladesh's Army, resolved his own well disguised ambiguity within a fortnight of the insurrection.

On November 15th the newly freed J.S.D. leaders, M.A. Jalil and A.S.M. Abdur Rab, urged the immediate formation of revolutionary councils among the army *jawans*, industrial workers, peasants and intellectuals to assist the Biplopi Gono Bahini usher in a proletarian revolution. They considered these to be pre-Soviet forms of state organization. But events were moving fast. Only a week later, on November 23rd, Ziaur Rahman staged his counter-coup. Where Spinola failed, Zia succeeded. Relying again mainly on police forces outside the army, Zia ordered the re-arrest of the J.S.D. leadership. On the night of the 23rd Jalil, Rab and Hasanul Huq Inu were suddenly picked up. On the 24th paramilitary police surrounded Taher and arrested him.

Two days after Taher's arrest four sympathizers of the J.S.D., including two of his younger brothers, attempted to take India's High Commissioner, Samar Sen, as a hostage. Sen was grabbed as he entered the embassy. While his abductors shouted, 'Don't shoot! Hostage!', the Ambassador's bodyguards opened fire with light machine guns, wounding the High Commissioner and killing two of the kidnappers instantly. One was Taher's brother. They never fired a shot. The two surviving members of the attempt confessed later to police that they had acted in the hope of holding Sen hostage in exchange for the release of Taher, Jalil, Rab, Inu and other J.S.D. leaders. They informed the police that they had acted independently and without party authority, but had done so because they believed Zia had betrayed the revolution of November 7th.

A general crackdown began throughout the country against the J.S.D. In the districts the police dragnet pulled in a number of local student and trade union leaders. In Dacca a strict curfew was imposed and areas cordoned off as police made house to house searches for party members. Severe trouble was reported from a number of cantonments following these arrests. In Dacca itself two dissident battalions were reported to have been disarmed with difficulty, while from Bogra, Comilla and Rangpur reports of hundreds of soldiers being detained filtered into the capital. In early December a new mutiny broke out at the naval base in Chittagong, and again in March 1976 further disturbances developed in army units stationed with the Chittagong Brigade. Immediate measures were taken by the Martial Law authorities to build up a reliable internal security force outside the now highly politicized army. In early January the first public announcement was made regarding the founding of a police Combat Battalion under the direction of the new Home Secretary, Salauddin Ahmed, a rehabilitated official who had directed internal security functions in East Pakistan under Ayub Khan. According to one Western news report, filed by Columbia Broadcasting System's Far East Correspondent, then visiting Dacca:

> In view of the question marks hanging over the loyalties of many personalities in the armed forces through their activities during November's mutiny, Zia is now engaged in a full-scale overhaul of Bangladesh's police and the formation of an elite 12,500-man special police force. The concept of the force was made public shortly after senior police officials from throughout the country met in Dacca with Zia and other Government leaders to discuss how Bangladesh's police could be 'reorganized into an effective force to face the challenge of the time'. Although most details of the overhaul have remained secret, sources in Dacca believe Zia reorganized the police in order to secure its full loyalty since the armed forces were considered unreliable. It is believed that this factor caused Zia to place the new special operations units, which would normally be part of the military, under police control.
>
> The new 12,500-man force, which is divided into five 2,500-man armed battalions, is about the same size as the ill-fated Rakkhi Bahini. Many observers here suspect that the new formation may have the same function as the Rakkhi Bahini, although the Government says the force is designed 'to combat crimes of a special nature', particularly where 'sophisticated weapons' are involved. It will also carry out 'special drives, mopping-up operations and other activities requiring special training and techniques'. The battalions will have no permanent base, but will 'always be in combat readiness' and available for duty anywhere in Bangladesh.
>
> The force appears to be just what the Government needs to carry through its rapidly accelerating campaign against the left-wing Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (Socialist National Party). The crack-down, which assumed large-scale proportions in Dacca after the abortive attempt to kidnap the Indian High Commissioner, has now spread throughout Bangladesh. Reports reaching the capital indicate that gunfights, chases and mass arrests are taking place regularly.
>
> In December, the Dacca press reported the seizure of 'a huge number of unauthorized weapons' and the apprehension of over 1,000 'miscreants' (the Government's term for J.S.D. members). Westerners engaged in relief work in eastern and northern Bangladesh claim police have threatened village headmen with arrest if they did not identify J.S.D. cadres. These Westerners also say that detention and harassment of family and friends of suspected J.S.D. members have been occurring with increasing frequency.[45]

Following the November insurrection old divisions on the radical left reopened. In particular Mohammed Toaha's pro-Chinese Purba Bangla Samaybadi Dal (East Bengal Communist Party), which in 1971 had taken an ambiguous stance on the national question and thus at that time had been in conflict with the strategic thesis of the J.S.D. nucleus, now publicly condemned the J.S.D. While Toaha supported the first dimension of the uprising that overthrew Khaled Musharraf, he quickly began to accuse the J.S.D. leaders of being covert Indian agents. He alleged they were weakening Bangladesh's front line of national defence against an aggressive India by promoting notions of class struggle inside the military. Toaha openly condemned these agitations, saying in an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* that the J.S.D. was:

> trying to sow seeds of discontent and dissension among the *jawans* of the armed forces by raising the bogey of class differences in the different strata of the armed forces. Using this cunning tactic they have been trying to disrupt the defence forces and to pave the way for the easy walkover of the Indian Army into the soil of Bangladesh.[46]

The J.S.D. leaders attempted to avoid divisive polemics with other radical groups. They considered left sectarianism a leading internal cause of earlier setbacks in Bengal's communist movement. While the J.S.D. has remained openly sympathetic in its literature to the Chinese Communist Party's general polemic and critique against revisionism, it has resisted following any international communist line. It has attempted to maintain a friendly tenor toward existing pro-Chinese Marxist-Leninist parties and factions in Bangladesh despite bitter attacks from these quarters. At most, the J.S.D. has gently criticized those who 'blindly copy the statement of a certain foreign communist party'.[47]

While the J.S.D. was driven underground, Toaha's E.B.C.P. came forward in a pattern similar to the Ayub days and gave open support to the martial law authorities. In Toaha's view the principal contradiction was one of defending national independence against imminent Indian aggression – not class struggle. Once this contradiction of national sovereignty was resolved, Toaha argued in a somewhat remarkable discussion of dialectics, all others would automatically be resolved.[48]

One of the few serious scholars of radical politics in Bangladesh, Talukder Maniruzzaman, in remarking on the re-emergence of earlier differences in the period after the November 7 insurrection, wrote:

> Other radical parties issued leaflets accusing the J.S.D. leaders of being covert Indian agents and of destroying the Bangladesh front line of defence by killing trained army officers and creating dissension among the soldiers. The J.S.D. leaders replied that Bangladesh could not be defended by the poorly equipped Bangladesh armed forces, but only through the revolutionary unity of the oppressed classes who formed 95% of the people of the country. The J.S.D. leaders asserted that their party was the true nationalist party of the proletariat, and charged that other 'so-called' revolutionary parties had been behaving in the pattern of various 'pseudo revolutionary' parties of Russia who had accused Lenin of being a German agent before the October Revolution of 1917.[49]

In the months which followed the arrest of Taher and other J.S.D. leaders, those sympathetic to Zia's new military regime argued that the J.S.D. had in fact had very little to do with the uprising. Besides several groups on the political right, such as the newly legalized Muslim League and the Democratic League, a number of leftist parties like Toaha's Samyabadi Dal claimed that foreign press reports had exaggerated the J.S.D.'s role and the part played by Taher. However, events came to belie these arguments when in June the Martial Law Authorities opened a secret trial inside Dacca Central Jail accusing Taher and 33 others of mutiny, treason and the 'propagation of political ideology and disaffection among the officers and other members of the Defence Services, the Bangladesh Rifles, the Police Forces, and the Ansars.'[50]

The J.S.D. itself did not regard the reversals which followed November 7th to be either permanent or a reflection of their having mistakenly pressed the mutiny into motion. No revolutionary movement could advance, they claimed, without difficult periods of struggle and the overcoming of defeats. They summed up the period in their journal *Samyabad* as follows:

> The powerful program and line of action taken by the revolutionary sepoys under the leadership of the Revolutionary Soldiers Organization warrants special mention. On the day of the 7th November 1975 they put forward the historic twelve point demands consisting of the release of political prisoners, return of democratic rights, and the elimination of the master-servant-like attitude and behaviour of the officers towards the sepoys. They also objected to being used as tools for safeguarding the vested interests of the ruling bourgeois class. Although Zia had accepted these demands under the existing situation, he was in fact deeply and secretly involved in a repugnant conspiracy on behalf of his own personal interests and those of his class.
>
> At the very outset he attempted to disperse and weaken the strength of the revolutionary forces by transferring them from cantonment to cantonment and at the same time imposing a number of brutal punishments. It goes without saying that, while he tried his utmost, he eventually failed to subdue the revolutionary spirit and consciousness of the sepoys. Thus, his dependence on the police force was increased at the expense of the army, with the consequent establishment of the 'Combat Battalion' and the 'Metropolitan Police', etc.
>
> In the final analysis, has the 7th November and the course of events following it weakened the forces of the proletarian movement? Has the freedom of working class men been pushed further back? The answer to these questions is an unequivocal 'no', because –
>
> First: the *jawans* of the Bangladesh Army can no longer be used as an effective tool in the interest of the ruling-exploiting class, since the Army is now imbued with revolutionary consciousness;
>
> Second: the development and evolutionary stages of the proletarian political forces and its line of action have been clearly marked;
>
> Third: the polarization of those forces for and against the proletariat has been speeded up;
>
> Fourth: the organizing capabilities of the bourgeois class have been seriously affected;

> Fifth: the imperialist revisionist-hegemonist groups have all understood that the revolutionaries of Bangladesh will never accept their autocracy.[51]

The Trial to the End

On the 24th of November, as they locked Taher away in Dacca Central Jail, those days of the Liberation War would seem long gone. At that time Zia and Taher had been comrades. Now, within two weeks of Taher's arrest, Zia ordered him to be moved out of the capital and taken to Rajshahi District Jail. Overland movement was considered too risky and on December 6th, locked in handcuffs, he was flown by helicopter to Rajshahi. For the next six months Taher sat life out in solitary confinement and waited, as Ziaur Rahman manoeuvred to put the genie of rebellion back into the bottle which Taher had uncorked.

Certain units, such as the Bengal Lancers, were disbanded and new trouble among the troops was suppressed at Chittagong in March and at Bogra in April. Pressure began to build up among the councils at the top echelons of the officer corps for an act of revenge against Taher from which there could be no recall. The composition and ideological orientation of this officer corps had shifted significantly following the repatriation, in 1973, of nearly 1,000 Bengali officers from Pakistan. In general, this group reflected a deep-seated military conservatism. In 1971 many had timidly stood by on the sidelines not knowing which way the civil war might go. Nearly all the Bengalis who were stranded in Pakistan and who were determined to join the liberation struggle, had managed to escape. However, for the repatriates, as they are called, discipline, order, a clear hierarchy and a glass of Black Label in the evening remained the touchstone of their military philosophy.

Although the Army cannot be strictly divided between those who fought in the Liberation War (the Mukti Bahini elements) and those who did not (the repatriates), there is something in this distinction. For the war itself had ideologically transformed many of its participants. Those who returned to Bangladesh from the cantonments of Pakistan two years after independence remained largely unchanged in spirit and in conceptual view, from their days as officers in the Pakistan Army. In 1976 the repatriates and their Islamic oriented conservatism were to emerge from the background they had inhabited in the three years since their return. Zia, having turned against the radicalized Mukti Bahini elements in the Army represented by Taher and the J.S.D., was now compelled more and more to rely upon the most conservative wing of the Army for backing. Zia, who had once openly despised these men as 'Johnny-Come-Lately' nationalists, now listened quietly as they demanded Taher's death.

Other pressures built up from the top officials of the National Security Intelligence (N.S.I.) and the Home Ministry for a trial which would settle the matter. A trial of Ziaur Rahman's left-wing friend would answer the question as to where Zia's loyalties truly lay. These two organizations, the first directed by A.M.S. Safdar, and the second by Salauddin Ahmed, were now headed by men who had been the seniormost intelligence and internal security officials during the era of Ayub Khan. These men moved into their present positions immediately following Mujib's assassination. A number of these suddenly rehabilitated technocrats had during 1971 been accused of active collaboration with the Pakistan Army. It was this lobby which collectively pressed for a trial. Zia, recognizing that his main rival for leadership in the armed forces had to be dealt with, moved with the wishes of the Islamic right and ordered a trial.

On May 22nd 1976 Taher was flown by helicopter from Rajshahi to Dacca. Under tight security he was placed in solitary confinement in Dacca Central Jail. No news of what was about to take place reached any newspapers. However, on June 15th an announcement was made that a Special Military Tribunal, designated No. 1, had been formed. It was to be chaired by a full army colonel, Yusuf Haider, a conservative repatriate who had not fought in '71. No information was given as to who would be tried before the military board, but the sections of the old British colonial law which were cited covered mutiny and high treason. Within days of the tribunal's formation, *The Bangladesh Times* carried an obscure legal notice buried on its back page. It ordered eleven people to surrender to the tribunal before June 21st, or they would be tried *in absentia*. The first man listed was Sirajul Alam Khan, a leading personality of the Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (J.S.D.). Of the ten others listed, seven were members of the army or airforce.

In a mild violation of an undeclared, but well understood news blackout, Dacca's leading Bengali daily, *Ittefaq*, had published a one-inch back-page news item entitled 'Conspiracy Case to Begin?'. *Ittefaq's* editor, Anwar Hossain, was imemdiately called to Army Headquarters and told if he tried it again, he would be arrested. For those who wanted to understand what was coming the news was there.

The present writer arrived in Dacca in late May to report on the continuing crisis Bangladesh then faced over the severe restriction of water flowing down the nation's principal river, the Ganges. India had opened a multi-million dollar river diversion project known as the Farraka Barrage which threatened agriculture in western Bangladesh with disaster. However, shortly after my arrival sources inside Bangladesh's Home Ministry, in the Army and in the J.S.D.'s underground, all informed me that the country's most explosive political trial since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was put before a court in the 1969 Agartala Conspiracy Case, was about to begin.

Besides Taher 33 others, including 22 members of the armed forces, were to be put on trial. The civilians in the dock included all the leading personalities of the J.S.D. then in detention. They were: M.A. Jalil, the J.S.D. President; A.M.S. Abdur Rab, General Secretary of the J.S.D; Hasanul Huq Inu, General Secretary of the Krishak (Peasants') League; Mohammed Shajahan, President of the Shramik (Workers') League; and M.R. Manna, General Secretary of the Chattra (Students') League. A leading Bengali economist, Dr. Aklaquar Rahman, and K.B.M. Mahmood, Editor of the English weekly *Wave*, were also among the accused.

The trial opened on June 21st 1976 behind the tall yellow-stained walls of Dacca's Central Jail. Never before in the history of either Bangladesh or 'East Pakistan' had a trial been held within the confines of any jail. A complete news blackout on the case was imposed inside the country and lawyers defending the accused had to take an oath of secrecy regarding the proceedings. Security at the prison was exceptional: sand-bagged machine gun nests surrounded every entrance. It was assumed the authorities were convening the tribunal inside the jail to avoid the possibility of trouble occurring en route to the courthouse.

There were many ironies that morning when the heavy iron gates at Dacca's Central Jail swung open and snapped closed again, admitting 30 black-coated barristers into the opening session. The trial and the charge of armed rebellion against established authority occurred at a time when there had been four governments in the past year, each succeeding the other by force of arms. Moreover, those officers who were part of Khaled Musharraf's November 3rd coup d'etat and who were dubbed at the time by the official press as 'Indian agents', had all been released from detention. Most notable among these was Brigadier Shafat Jamil who had been Khaled's second-in-command. It was Shafat and Khaled who had placed Ziaur Rahman under house arrest during the four days they had taken power. So it was that those officers who were behind the November 3rd anti-Zia coup were freed, and those men who staged the general uprising which freed Zia now went on trial for their lives.

The tribunal, first convened on June 21st and then recessed for a week to permit defence lawyers seven days to prepare a defence for a case which the prosecution had been working on for six months. The accused, despite repeated requests throughout the period of their detention, had been denied access to legal counsel and communication with relatives. Following the opening session, this correspondent filed despatches to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hongkong), *The BBC* and *The Guardian*(London). Transmission of these reports did not go through from Dacca due to censorship. However, copies flown to Bangkok by a passenger on an outgoing international flight meant that in the end the news was transmitted from Thailand. As a result, the first report residents of Dacca had of the case came over the BBC Bengali Service.

On June 28th when the trial reopened, this correspondent, who had reported from Bangladesh for a full year in 1974, stood outside the gates of Dacca Central Jail taking photographs of the Chief Prosecutor, A.T.M. Afzal, the Chairman of the Tribunal, Colonel Yusuf Haider and others as they entered the prison gates. I was told by the police officials present that the trial was top secret and I was not allowed to photograph anyone or anything. I said I had been reporting on events in Bangladesh for several years and was unaware of any such official guidelines or orders. If they wished me to stop photographing or reporting the case, I suggested they should show me a written order from the Information Ministry to that effect. Otherwise, I would continue my work as a journalist without interruption. I then photographed the police officer questioning me who threw up his hands in front of his face and ran away.

I was left alone for more than two hours, as I waited outside the prison gates for the day's recess. I had wanted to interview the Tribunal Chairman so as to have an official statement of why the case was being held in such secrecy. But at 11.00 a.m. on June 28th I was arrested and detained in Dacca Central Jail. I was asked to surrender the film of the photographs I had taken. I informed the police officials and the army lieutenant who had taken me into custody that I would not voluntarily give up the film. Calls were made to the National Security Intelligence and Martial Law Headquarters. Within the hour ten officials arrived to sort out the case.

I was asked by an N.S.I. man calling himself Shamin Ahmed why I was interested in the Taher case. I explained secret political trials tended to rub me the wrong way whether done by Stalin, Franco or Zia. I said I was a reporter and that if the six majors who killed Mujib had been put on trial by Khaled Musharraf inside Dacca Central Jail, I would have reported it. And if Khaled had lived and Zia had put him on trial, I would have been at the jail, as I was now, trying to report. And if Zia was now putting Taher on trial, inside a prison and with frightened lawyers sworn to secrecy, I would report it. What was wrong with people knowing what was happening, I asked Ahmed. He picked up my camera and handed it to a young telecommunications officer, who some years earlier had trained in New York under the American Office of Public Safety programme. This young fellow ripped the film out.

A phone call soon arrived from Martial Law Headquarters ordering my release. An army major said that Headquarters thought the detention of a foreign correspondent might be embarrassing. That evening I cabled another despatch concerning the trial. The cable office accepted the story, but did not transmit it. The next evening, as I returned to my residence, I was met by five Special Branch officers who informed me I was again under arrest. They were under orders to take me directly to the airport and put me on the first available flight out of the country. The next flight out was to India, from where I had been expelled six months earlier for reporting Indira Gandhi's Emergency.[52] Censorship was tough during those days in Delhi and no foreign correspondent paid any attention to it. Thus, I had not been the only journalist to be so honoured with deportation from India – merely the last. I explained patiently to the Special Branch officers that they could not deport me to India since I had already been deported from there. In the end, after a modicum of intervention from the U.S. Embassy, I was kept for three days under house arrest until the next flight to Bangkok. On July 1st I was deported to Thailand and the last foreign and for that matter domestic news report on the Taher trial ended. The authorities now had their secrecy buttoned up.

The case went on for seventeen more days. Taher initially refused to attend the tribunal calling it 'an instrument of the government to commit crimes in the name of justice'. He also said that, if he were to be judged, the panel must be made up of Mukti Bahini officers from the Army, who had fought for the independence of the country, and not by men like Yusuf Haider who had taken no part in the Liberation War. But when the tribunal was formed no Mukti Bahini officers would sit on it. Taher's lawyers were finally able to persuade him to participate in the trial. They believed at first the tribunal would be able to function without intimidation. It was advice many of them regretted later when it became known that Taher's sentence had been decided even before the tribunal opened. On July 17th, the Chairman of the Tribunal, Yusuf Haider, announced the sentence: Taher was to hang.

On July 18th the government ordered newspapers to publish an official statement on the case and nothing more. Banner headlines in the *Bangladesh Observer* read: TAHER TO DIE. It was the first news through the Bengali media that the country had of the case and it came at the end of the trial as a *fait accompli.*

An appeal for clemency made to President A.M. Sayem was turned down. Sayem was a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Five years earlier, he had written the most significant legal decision on capital punishment and the rights of an accused ever to be handed down by the Supreme Court. In the case against Purna Chandra Mondal, Sayem threw out a death sentence passed on the accused. The judgement established a legal precedent as significant as the Miranda decision in the United States. Sayem argued that 'the last moment appointment of a defence lawyer for an accused virtually negated the right of an accused to be properly defended in the case'.

In the Mondal case Sayem had written:

> The Code of Crominal Procedure confers a right on every accused person brought before a Criminal Court to be 'defended' by a lawyer. That right extends to access to the lawyer for private consultations and also affording the latter an adequate opportunity of preparing the case for the defence. A last moment appointment of an advocate for defending a prisoner accused of a capital offence not only results in a breach of the provision of the 6th Paragraph of Chapter XII of the *Legal Remembrance's Manual* (1960), and frustrates the object behind the elaborate provisions of that Chapter. Such an appointment results also in a denial to the prisoner of the right conferred on him by section 340 of the Code . . . . The denial of this right must be held to have rendered the trial as one not according to law, necessitating a fresh trial.[53]

Taher was not allowed access to a lawyer until the day the case against him opened. Nevertheless, Sayem, who as a judge had written that no man under law could be sentenced to death were he not given the right of an adequate defence, now in the position of President of the country, reaffirmed the death sentence on Taher. And he made his decision within twenty-four hours of the sentencing.

The Chief Prosecutor, A.T.M. Afzal, after the trial was to be rewarded with an appointment to the position of Judge of the Dacca High Court, but, a worried man, he anxiously claimed to his colleagues that he was more stunned than anyone at the sentence of death. As prosecutor, he claimed, he had never asked for the death sentence. He said such a judgement was impossible. There was no law in existence under which Taher could be executed for the crimes with which he was charged. Ten days after Taher was dead the Law Ministry remedied this legal discrepancy.[54] On July 31st 1976 the Ministry published the Martial Law Decree's 20th Amendment which made it a crime punishable by death for anyone to 'propagate any political opinion' among the armed forces of Bangladesh.

In London, Amnesty International's Headquarters issued an urgent appeal to the Bangladesh President to grant Taher clemency:

> A martial law trial held *in camera* inside jail falls short of internationally accepted standards as laid down in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Before criminal courts the case against the accused can be established according to the normal process of law and with all legal safeguards, including the right of appeal to the highest judicial authorities.

Thus read the Amnesty cable. Amnesty International called for a complete retrial for Taher and other J.S.D. leaders. Its appeal to Sayem went out on July 20th.

The next morning at 4 a.m. Abu Taher was hanged in Dacca Central Jail.

> Kishorganj
> 18th August 1976
>
> My dear bora bhaijan,
>
> I cannot think of what to write you today. I cannot realize that Taher is no longer with me. I cannot imagine how I will live after the partner of my life has left. It seems that the children are in great trouble. Such tiny children don't understand anything. Nitu says, 'Father, why did you die? You would have been alive, if you were still here.' The children do not understand what they have lost. Every day they go to the grave with flowers. They place the flowers and pray, 'Let me become like father.' Jishu says that father is sleeping on the moon.
>
> Unfortunately Nitu saw father in November, but could not see him up to the last moment, since she was in Kishorganj. But I am very fortunate. The path Taher has shown me is my chief weapon. When he was alive, he gave me the greatest honour amongst Bengali women. In his death he gave me the respect of the world. All my desires he has fulfilled in such a short time. When the dear friends and comrades of Taher convey their condolences to me, then I think: Taher is still alive amongst them, and will live in them. They are like my own folk. I am proud. He has defeated death. Death could not triumph over him.
>
> I shall describe all that happened:
>
> On Saturday July 17th at 3 o'clock the verdict was delivered: the death sentence for Taher. We all became speechless including our twenty-five barristers. People all over the country were shocked because the government could not prove anything. Even the state witnesses admitted

the contribution of Taher on November 7th. The prominent barristers, Ataur Rahman Khan, Zulmat Ali, Alam and others, became restless. They went to the President condemning the tribunal and declaring it had been set up illegally. Taher told the barristers: 'This government which I have brought to power – you are not to request anything from them.' At the same time hearing them declare the death sentence he broke out into a tremendous laughter. All the other prisoners broke down in tears. He told everybody, 'If lives are not sacrificed in this way, how will the common people be liberated?' We have made every effort, though Taher has written me, 'Don't bow your head. I do not fear death. If you can feel proud, that is enough.'

In the afternoon on the 19th he met all of us. He was completely natural and cheerful. He read to us what he had written after the tribunal gave the verdict. To me he said, 'It does not befit you to feel sad. After Kudi Ram I will be the first in South Asia to die like this.' When I told him others had asked me to file a mercy petition, he said, 'Is that to bring me the illusion of life? Is my life smaller than the life of Sayem and Zia?'

He gave us so much courage that we came out laughing as well. We did not know this was our last meeting. All politicians, teachers of the country, as well as foreigners made requests to the government. But the authorities did not have the guts to let Taher live. They have made Taher transcend time, they made him immortal.

All the brothers of Taher were with him: Yusuf, Belal, Monu. On the 20th in the evening Taher was informed that on the 21st, early in the morning at 4 o'clock, the death sentence would be carried out. He accepted their news and thanked those who had to deliver the message. And then he took his dinner completely normally. Later the Maulvi [priest] was brought and asked him to seek absolution for his sins. He said, 'I am not touched by the evils of your society, nor have I ever been. I am pure. You go now. I wish to sleep.' He went to sleep quietly. At 3 o'clock in the night he was woken up. He asked how much time was left. After knowing the time he cleaned his teeth and shaved himself and bathed. All those present came forward to help him. He forbade them to do so, saying, 'I don't want you to touch my body which is pure.'

After his bath he told the others to prepare tea and to cut the mangoes we had given. He himself put on the artificial limb, shoes and trousers. He put on a beautiful shirt, his wristwatch, and combed his hair carefully. After that he took tea, mangoes, and smoked cigarettes with all those present. Looking at his courage all burst into tears about the death sentence of such a man. He consoled everybody, saying: 'Come on, laugh. Why are you so gloomy? I had wanted to make the face of the distressed bloom with smiles. Death cannot defeat me.' He was asked whether he had any wish. He said, 'In exchange for my death – the peace of the common man.'

After that Taher said: 'Is there any time left?' They answered: 'a little bit.' He said: 'In that case I shall recite a poem to you.' He read out a poem about his duty and his feelings. And then he said: 'All right, I am ready. Go ahead. Do your duty.' He went towards the gallows and taking the rope in his own hand he put it around his neck. And he said: 'Good-bye countrymen. Long live Bangladesh! Long Live Revolution!' He told them to press the button, but nobody came forward. He said: 'Why, don't you have courage?' Then somebody did it. It was all over. His brothers were shown.

No one amongst the 7,500 prisoners of the jail took any rice that day. We were given the body at 2:50. In the midst of the strictest security a car was taken inside the jail and the body lifted into it. After that 5 trucks and buses filled with heavy security guards escorted the body to the helipad and lifted him onto a helicopter. It was 7:50 in the evening. He was buried in the family graveyard.

A special camp was set up and the grave was guarded for 21 days. They fear even the dead. He has departed from us, but he has left behind a rich legacy. In performing his great task to mankind he came upon both poison and nectar. He drank the poison and left us the nectar. Although it is total darkness all around me and I cannot find my moorings, and am lost, yet I know this distress is not permanent, there will be an end. When I see that the ideals of Taher have become the ideals of all, then I will find peace. It is my sorrow that when that day of happiness comes, Taher will not be there.

Affectionately

Lutfa

'History Will Absolve Me'

An unheard of situation had arisen, Honourable Magistrates. Here was a regime afraid to bring an accused before the courts; a regime of blood and terror which shrank in fear at the moral conviction of a defenceless man – unarmed, slandered, and isolated. Thus, having deprived me of all else, they finally deprived me of the trial in which I was the principal accused.

What dreadful crimes this regime must have committed, to so fear the voice of one accused man! As a result of so many obscure and illegal machinations, due to the will of those who govern and the weakness of those who judge, I find myself here in this little room of the Civil Hospital – to which I have been brought to be tried in secret; so that my voice may be stifled and so that no one may learn the things I am going to say. Why, then, do we need that imposing Palace of Justice which the Honourable Magistrates would without doubt find rather more comfortable? I must warn you: it is unwise to administer justice from a hospital room, surrounded by sentinels with bayonets fixed; the citizens might suppose that our justice is sick and that it is captive . . . .

I remind you, your laws of procedure provide that trials shall be 'both audible and public'; however, the people have been barred altogether from this session of the court. The only civilians admitted here have been two attorneys and six reporters, whose newspapers' censorship will prevent from printing a word that I say. I see, as my sole audience, in this chamber and in the corridors, nearly a hundred soldiers and officers. I am grateful for the polite and serious attention they give me. I only wish I could have the whole army before me! I know, one day this army will seethe with rage to wash away the awful, the shameful bloodstains splattered across the uniform by the present ruthless clique in their lust for power. On that day, oh, what a fall awaits those mounted, in arrogance, on the backs of the noble soldiers! – provided, that is, that the people have not pulled them down long before!

Fidel Castro, 1953.

Notes and References

1. In his final letter written from Dacca Central Jail on 18th July 1976, Taher stated, 'During the entire trial there was no reference whatsoever to the Kader Bahini.' However, *The Bangladesh Observer* and other Dacca newspapers in their only report on the trial, published the day following the sentencing, stated that the government had alleged that Kader Siddiqui had been at the 'beck and call' of Taher. He records in his own testimony (see page 92). his condemnation of those who in 1975 had gone 'over to India and started carrying out armed action along our border . . . . In spite of my incarceration, my solitary confinement and the accompanied harassment, I did not fail to register my protest against this threat.' Taher was prevented by the Tribunal from reading in full this section of his testimony.

   Kader Siddiqui, the character concerned, first developed his reputation during the 1971 War of Independence as a guerilla fighter in Tangail District. A lumpen and bandit-style personality, Kader Siddiqui appalled both Bengalis and foreigners when, in public, shortly after the liberation of Dacca, he personally bayoneted three alleged collaborators to death. The entire incident was filmed from start to finish by foreign film crews whom he had invited to the spectacle. He returned to Tangail following independence and became the recipient of substantial Awami League patronage. Following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975, Siddiqui and his followers began to offer resistance to the post-coup authorities headed by Khondakar Mustaque. Elements identifying themselves with Siddiqui gradually withdrew to India and, with the active and direct assistance of the Indian Government's Border Security Force, set up training camps in the Assam border area.

   In the period following the failure of Khaled Musharraf's November 3rd counter-coup, Siddiqui's followers began staging regular cross border attacks from their bases in India. After the defeat of Indira Gandhi's government in India's national elections, the new Janata government reportedly ordered the closure of these bases, and the Indian External Affairs Minister stated in Parliament that while 'no force had been used on Bangladesh nationals who had taken refuge in India to return to their country . . . the government would not extend the political liberty enjoyed by citizens in the country to permit the use of Indian soil for hostile activities against neighbouring countries.' (*The Statesman Weekly*, 2 July, 1977).
2. No firm evidence has ever been produced to establish unequivocably that Brigadier Musharraf acted on November 3rd with the prior knowledge of the Indian Government or at their behest. Military sources close to the Khaled Musharraf group in the Bangladesh Army have categorically denied to this writer that any such link existed and they say that such allegations are complete fabrications. These sources claim that Khaled's coup had the objective of 'restoring the chain of command' in the Army. They argue that the command structure had virtually ceased to function after the coup d'etat which killed Mujib. In short, they wished to re-establish the lines of hierarchy characteristic of a

conventional bourgeois army command, and they claimed that, in their minds, this issue stood apart from the question of civilian leadership.

Since late August Khaled, who was Chief of General Staff, had been urging Major-General Ziaur Rahman, Army Chief of Staff, to take action against the Majors who had killed Mujib and who had since then been refusing senior officers' orders to return to the cantonments with their troops. In the period between August 15th and November 3rd 1975, the forces under the command of Majors Rashid and Farooq, the Bengal Lancers and the Armoured Corps, remained ensconced around the President's House. They refused to return to barracks out of fear of being disarmed. Moreover, Khondakar Mustaque in this period relied on them militarily as the only units completely loyal to him.

According to sources close to Khaled, tension between Khaled and Zia grew over Zia's refusal to issue orders or to move militarily against the Majors. In late October, Zia reportedly argued to Khaled that the time was still not ripe for action. Khaled, in turn, argued that senior officers were fed up with taking orders from Majors acting as if they were Generals. Similarly, on the original night of August 15th, Khaled had apparently urged immediate action against the Majors, but was dissuaded by Zia who told him any such action would be premature. It seems clear that Khaled, like many others, was unaware of Zia's pre-August contacts with the Majors and representatives of the Mustaque circle. And Khaled himself had never been approached by the Majors or Mustaque's contact men; he had been considered a Mujib loyalist.

Bengali military sources argue that Khaled's coup against Zia on November 3rd was perceived by Khaled as an exclusively internal Army matter, and that Khaled was prepared for the sake of stability to retain Mustaque as President. Mustaque confirmed, in an interview with this writer in June 1976, that Khaled had indeed asked him to stay on in the office of President, but that he, Mustaque, in light of the new conditions had refused to do so. The Brigadier, say his friends, had acted suddenly under pressure from other officers, in the hope of simply 'restoring the chain of command', which General Zia had refused to do, leaving 'the civilians' to sort out the rest for themselves.

But the Brigadier's political naivete was extraordinary if he believed he could truly separate the issue of military from political power. Mustaque could not maintain his position without the confidence of some military arm he could fully rely on. Moreover, with the military units which had eliminated Mujib no longer intact, it was only to be expected that forces loyal to Mujib would reassert themselves. Whether Khaled was the conscious representative of such a restoration is highly debatable. Sources in the Brigadier's own family claimed to this writer that Khaled had been enraged at his mother and brother when they led a pro-Mujib demonstration in Dacca on November 4th, thus implicating him in what appeared to be a conscious pro-Mujibist coup. The photograph of Khaled's mother and brother leading the pro-Mujib demonstration, which appeared on the front page of *Ittefaq* on November 5th, more than anything else, doomed his regime and made the image of a BAKSAL restoration plausible to an anxious public.

Two persons within Bangladesh who figured prominently in slapping the label 'Indian agent' on Khaled were the journalists, Atiqal Alam and Enayethullah Khan, the latter a distant relative of the Brigadier. Alam, the Dacca correspondent of the B.B.C. and Reuters, moved through Dacca's diplomatic community on November 4th and 5th, claiming to possess a letter written by Tajuddin Ahmed, a former minister in Mujib's government and prominent Awami League personality, then in prison in Dacca Central Jail. The Tajuddin Letter, purportedly written to the Indian High Commissioner in Dacca, Samar Sen, spoke of coup plans and preparations. Alam, who showed the letter to, among others, officials of the German Embassy, claimed categorically that it was written in Tajuddin's hand and demonstrated Indian involvement in Khaled's putsch. The object of the coup, Alam told foreign diplomats, was to bring the 'pro-Indian' Tajuddin Ahmed out of prison and into the post of President. From Alam's display of this note, the rumour spread along Embassy row that Indian intelligence was behind the operation. Alam, interviewed in London three months after the events and again three years later, said he had returned the Tajuddin Letter to his source, and had no copy to prove it ever existed. Nevertheless, he claims it to have been absolutely genuine. Journalist colleagues critical of Alam claim no such letter ever existed and that the whole episode was a black propaganda exercise. [On other matters connected to Atiqal Alam's political journalism, see footnote 1, Part II.] The author of the purported note, Tajuddin Ahmed, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, was bayoneted to death on the night of November 5 1975 in Dacca Central Jail. Military and intelligence men allegedly linked to Mustaque are claimed by prison sources to have been involved in the jail murders.

Following the November 7th Uprising, the Editor of the *Bangladesh Times*, Enayethullah Khan, wrote a front page editorial in the paper on November 8th accusing the 'forces of expansionism [India] and social imperialism [Soviet Union]' of having backed Khaled. 'The alien hand in the counter-coup of November 3 was apparent,' wrote Khan. 'As the usurpers attempted a restoration of a fallen image of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, they took advantage of the ambition of some unpatriotic army leaders . . . and they struck, however briefly, in their bid to undo the change and succeeded for a while to create a smokescreen.' Khan, who had previously edited the pseudo-leftist weekly *Holiday*, was appointed Editor of the state owned *Bangladesh Times* by Khondakar Mustaque immediately after Mujib's killing. Following the Mustaque regime's collapse, Khan continued as Editor of the *Bangladesh Times* and became a supporter of General Ziaur Rahman. In 1977 he became a Cabinet Minister in the military government and a founding organizer of the General's first political front, JAGODAL. But, within a year, due to factional disputes within the regime, the General dropped Khan, once his most important of publicists.

Whatever the truth about Khaled Musharraf's own motives and prior contacts, the response his coup provoked within the Army and in the country's urban population was explosive. There was a nationwide lightning-like reaction, based on the judgement that Khaled's coup represented an Indian backed attempt to establish a client regime in

Dacca. This sharp nationalist reaction was developed by the J.S.D. leadership and mass organizations into a full blown insurrection. The full story of the Khaled coup, however, has yet to come out.

3. Kali Charan Ghosh, *Famines In Bengal 1770-1943*, (Indian Associated Publishing Co., Calcutta, 1944); Ian Stephens, *Monsoon Morning* (Ernest Benn, London, 1966); and Amartya Sen, 'Starvation and Exchange Entitlements: A General Approach and its Application to the Great Bengal Famine', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol. 1 No. 1, March 1977.
4. A C.I.A. document provided to the author notes the early Taher-Zia relationship. The document entitled 'Mukti-Bahini Operations In The Rangpur-Mymensingh-Tangail Sector' is an Intelligence Information Report from the Directorate of Plans, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (Report No.-311/08412-71), and is dated 3 December 1971. The document states: 'The headquarters and training centers for the Rangpur-Mymensingh-Tangail sector of the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces) are located in India near the western Meghalaya-East Pakistan frontier. The Mukti Bahini commander in this sector is Brigadier Ziaur Rahman. Other principal officers are Major Taher, Captain Ali Ahmad and Captain Quader Siddique . . . . Sector operation camps are located at Dalu, Maherdraganj, Phorakhara, Bagniara, Mankachar and Maheshkola. There are ten training camps in the sector. Dalu, the largest has a capacity of 1,250 trainees . . . . The Rangpur-Mymensingh-Tangail sector force consists of approximately 10,000 men and is commanded by Brigadier Ziaur Rahman, alias Zia Khan, who was transferred from the Chittagong sector in July 1971. Major Taher, subsector commander for Mymensingh, acts as Rahman's deputy.' The rest of the document is a detailed list of all Bengali military and civilian officials serving in the sector, base locations, accounts of engagements, and the role and identity of Indian officers in liaison with the Mukti Bahini. The source of information for the C.I.A. report was 'a middle level West Bengali journalist' described as a 'comparatively new source whose reliability has not been established', but 'who has provided credible information in the past'.
5. 'The Twelve Demands', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 December 1975. For the complete text of the twelve points see Larai, 6th Issue, November 1975.
6. *Ibid*.
7. 'Bangladesh: State and Revolution', Frontier (Calcutta), 13 December 1975.
8. On the basis of numerous interviews with Bengali sources, it is now clear that in the pre-August period Ziaur Rahman was simultaneously maintaining two principal tracks of clandestine contacts, one with the Mustaque camp and one with the J.S.D. Zia, who during this pre-August period may have been genuinely ambiguous about his own stand in the coming turmoil, was playing his cards cautiously and cleverly. He told the Majors in March that he would not oppose any coup moves against Mujib, but nor would he lead any. He appears also to have been in contact with other representatives of the Mustaque group, allegedly including Chashi, promising to neutralize any reaction from units in the Army to a *successful* coup. [See footnote 2; Zia is reported to

have persuaded Khaled Musharraf not to move immediately against the Majors on the night of August 14/15.]

Before Mujib was killed, Zia is also said, by a source close to Mujib, to have met the President. In a discussion with Mujib which took place about ten days before the coup, Zia reportedly told Mujib *in general terms* that there was trouble in the Army and discipline was becoming difficult to maintain. He reportedly urged the President to adopt measures against corruption, smuggling and inflation which would make the restoration of order in the country an easier task. This type of discussion between Mujib and his Army Commanders was not unusual and had been held many times before. Discipline in the Army had become difficult after the Defence Forces had been called in to conduct anti-smuggling and anti-hoarding operations in April 1974. Within weeks the Army had been pulled off the operation because of protests from party functionaries in the Awami League, who were being arrested while in possession of smuggled goods by Army units. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 'A Declaration of Martial Democracy', 13 May 1974; 'Coup in Bangladesh', 29 August 1975.) The purpose, however, of Zia's discussion with Mujib in this instance is said to have been an act of insurance. If the Majors failed in the execution of their coup attempt (Zia had no deep trust or respect for their operational skills or capacities) he would always be able to safely remind Mujib of their discussion in early August. At any rate Mujib, who was slipping further into his own blind megalomania, reportedly told Zia, in characteristic style, that he should not worry. Mujib said he would take care of everything. According to one knowledgeable government source, 'In this period Zia was putting bets on every number on the table. He might lose some money on a few, but he was certain to be with the winning number when it came up.'

After Mujib was killed and the instability of the Mustaque regime set in, Zia renewed his earlier contacts with the J.S.D. Meanwhile General Shafiullah had been removed as Chief of Staff and packed off to Malaysia as Ambassador. Zia took command of the Army. He still tacitly supported Mustaque and opposed elements in the Army represented by Khaled Musharraf, Shafat Jamil and other officers who wished to disarm the Majors and restore the 'chain of command'. As tension grew, Zia intensified his contact with J.S.D. liaison men. At this stage the popular political and military force represented by the J.S.D. was the only other significant factor in the country besides pro-Mujib and pro-Mustaque factions in the Army, bureaucracy and the old Awami League. Pro-Pakistan elements, in the sense of those who had fully identified themselves with the Pakistan Army in 1971, were in temporary alliance with the Mustaque group in this period. (See Part II, 'The Old Nexus and a New Nemesis'). As the Mustaque regime moved deeper towards its own crisis, Zia reportedly gave firm assurances to the J.S.D. leadership through intermediaries that in the next crunch he would support their transitional programme to restore democratic rights in the country. In the main the programme wanted the immediate release of an estimated 62,000 political prisoners, the withdrawal of arrest warrants against thousands of other political workers, the lifting of censorship regulations and the ban on opposition newspapers, and finally the formation of an all party national democratic government (excluding BAKSAL), constituted as an interim government which would immediately move toward national elections.

On the basis of Zia's previous history, the J.S.D. made the judgement that a tactical alliance with the General based on these transitional principles was correct, possible and plausible. Taher, himself, apparently played an important role in structuring and establishing this association in the period between August and November 1975. Thus, it was no accident that Zia immediately picked up his telephone on the night of November 3rd, as he was being arrested by Khaled's forces, and called Taher. With his life in the balance it was the only quarter he could appeal to. What the J.S.D. did not realize in this period was the depth and extent of contact which Zia had been maintaining with the Mustaque camp long before the August putsch. On the 7th of November, the time had arrived when Zia could no longer keep bets going on every horse and hope to ride into the future. As in all great crises, the time for a fundamental sorting out of true positions and characteristics had arrived.

Even on the 7th, Zia's own position seemed to be characteristically ambiguous. Here was the political schizophrenia of a former Pakistan Army officer imbued with discipline and conservative convention, who for a year had fought a guerrilla war, and been somewhat touched by radical ideas. During and immediately after the Liberation War, in discussions with Taher, Ziauddin and other radical officers, he had seen their point and understood some of it, but been unable to make the transition. They, in turn, regarded him as an officer who might be won over at some stage.

But, as the Uprising progressed on the 7th, the struggle for Zia's loyalty began in earnest. The two sides which had been pulling at Zia since the beginning of 1975 – the pro-American/pro-Islamic Mustaque camp versus the J.S.D. – began cashing in their chips with the General. Initially on the morning of the 7th, Zia had publicly supported the most radical dimension of the Uprising, The Twelve Demands, signing a copy of the document in the presence of troops at Dacca Radio. But, although Mustaque had been driven into political oblivion by the Uprising, his supporters renewed the battle to gain Zia's adherence to their side. According to Army sources, Mustaque's leading protege, Mabub Alam Chashi, arrived at Zia's headquarters on the morning of the 7th, soon after Taher had left to organize a mass meeting of sepoys at the Shahid Minar. Chashi, who is alleged to have been Mustaque's liaison man with the General in the pre-August period, pressed Zia to stand fast and line up with the conservative camp. Meanwhile, the Special Armed Police units, with their own intelligence links and dominated by INPOLSE graduates (see Part II, Appendix D) were readying themselves for a crackdown on the J.S.D. (see note 41 below). Zia was in a position where he had no choice but to get off the fence. Within two weeks it was crystal clear that he had opted to become the new leader of what was virtually the Mustaque government, minus Mustaque and his six Majors. Whether this was part of a considered contingency all along is not known, but, by failing to recognize this prospect, the J.S.D. paid heavily.

9. 'Bangladesh: JSD's Role', *Frontier*, 7 February 1976.
10. *The Sunday Times*, 5 December 1971.
11. For a critical assessment of how Britain's withdrawal from India was finally staged, see ch. 50, Ian Stephens, *Unmade Journey*, (Stacy International, 1977). Stephens, formerly Editor of the *Statesman* (Calcutta), argues that a stepped up, inadequately prepared and ineptly executed partition policy decided on by Mountbatten, led to an enormous and tragically unnecessary death toll estimated at 500,000 lives.
12. Neville Maxwell, *India and the Nagas*, (Minority Rights Group, London, 1973); Dilip Hiro, *Inside India Today* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 209-18.
13. Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh* (Bangladesh Books International Ltd., Dacca, 1975), pp. 41-2; Paul Brass and Marc Franda (eds.), *Radical Politics in South Asia* (MIT Press, 1973).
14. Fazlul Quader Quaderi, *Bangladesh Genocide and The World Press*, (Dacca, 1972).
15. Rosa Luxemburg, *The National Question: Selected Writings*; Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917* (Monthly Review Press, 1967); Horace B. Davis, *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism* (Monthly Review, 1978). In terms of the East Pakistan communist movement, Maniruzzaman has cogently summed up the failure of the leading tendencies of the Marxist left in the 1950's and 60's to come to grips with the national question in Pakistan; 'One of the major doctrinal lapses of Marxist international communism has been the non-recognition of the force of nationalism as a factor in the change of history. Engaged in theoretical hairsplitting on the division of the international communist movement, East Pakistan communist revolutionaries, while thrashing out their tactical moves, failed at the beginning to take into consideration the force of East Pakistan nationalism. In the mid 1960's, the pro-Peking communists, by siding with the Ayub Khan government on the grounds of Ayub's pro-Chinese stand in foreign policy, even found it necessary to oppose the six-point autonomy movement, which ultimately gave the leadership of East Pakistan's liberation struggle to the Awami League.' See Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh, op. cit.*, p. 30.
16. V.I. Lenin, 'Critical Remarks on the National Question' in *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, (Progress Publishers), pp. 17-51; and 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination', pp. 393-454. See also 'The "Vexed Questions" of Our Party: The "Liquidationist" and "National Questions" ' in *Collected Works*, Vol 18, (Progress Publishers), pp. 405-23. For a detailed analysis of Lenin's differences with Stalin on the Georgian conflict and the treatment of the national question in the new Soviet state, see Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, (Monthly Review, New York).
17. 'Baluchistan: Festering Dilemma for Bhutto', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 May 1976.
18. From an unpublished text of an interview with Chakar Khan Marri. A

few excerpts of the transcript were published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 28 May 1976. For a detailed discussion of linguistic divisions and the 'nationality problem' in South Asia, particularly India, see Selig Harrison's *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (Princeton University Press, 1960); also Harrison's 'After the Afghan Coup: Nightmare In Baluchistan', *Foreign Policy*, No. 32, Autumn 1978. On the attitude of Pakistan's National Awami Party (NAP) to post-Bhutto developments in Baluchistan, see the interview with Wali Khan, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 June 1978.

19. Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh, op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.
20. *Pakistan Times*, 13 April 1971; see also Robin Blackburn, *Explosion in a Subcontinent* (Penguin, 1975), pp. 358-9.
21. G.W. Choudhury, *The Last Days of United Pakistan* (Indiana University Press, 1974), pp. 358-9.
22. 'Bangladesh: A New Bogeyman' in 'China Focus '74'', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 October 1974.
23. 'A Bengali's Grandstand View', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 October 1974.
24. 'A New Bogeyman', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 October, 1974.
25. Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh, op. cit.*, pp. 51-2. According to Maniruzzaman, 'The pro-Peking leftists, who had already split into several factions prior to the liberation struggle, became totally confused when Peking chose to support the Yahya regime in its brutal suppression of the liberation movement.'

In West Bengal the Bangladesh crisis produced similar splits in the pro-Chinese Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [C.P.I. (M-L)] known as the Naxalites. As with their counterparts in East Bengal, the Indian Naxalites were deeply divided over the Bangladesh issue. Ashim Chatterjee, a Central Committee member of the C.P.I. (M-L), in 1971 denounced the existing line of the party's chairman, Charu Mazumdar, as 'opposed to the stand on this issue of the great, glorious and correct Communist Party of China'. Chatterjee argued at the time in a vein similar to that of the E.B.C.P. (M-L)'s Abdul Huq, in maintaining Pakistan was fighting a just war. Mazumdar, however, said that even if India as an aggressive power intervened, it would not have been correct for a communist party to support Yahya Khan. Taking a position somewhat similar to Toaha, Mazumdar said that communists would have to fight on two fronts: against Indian aggression and against Yahya Khan's forces. Neither Chatterjee nor Mazumdar opened a serious discussion on the relevant aspects of the national question.

What seemed apparent was that neither the Naxalites in West Bengal nor the pro-Peking factions in Bangladesh had taken to heart one of the most fundamental aspects of the Chinese Communist Party's breach with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Chinese, despite their 1967 endorsement, also seemed to have become a bit concerned with the form of 'Maoism' emerging in South Asia which appeared more preoccupied with China's position on issues, than with developing its own independent analysis of the conditions facing India and Pakistan. In 1970, a year prior to the Bangladesh crisis, a member of the Central

Committee of the C.P.I. (M-L) visited Peking to discuss with the Chinese leaders a number of questions being debated inside the Naxalite movement. The visitor to Peking had extended discussions with Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng. It is also said that he met Mao Tse-tung.

In these discussions Chou En-lai reportedly criticized certain slogans of the C.P.I. (M-L). The Naxalites had been actively plastering Calcutta and other cities with posters of Mao and slogans such as 'China's Chairman Is Our Chairman' or 'China's Path Is Our Path'. Chou En-lai mentioned these in particular, saying, 'The world is divided into classes and nations. The proletariat of each territory is the chief representative of its own country. So we cannot but take into consideration the national limits. To refer to the leader of our country as the leader of another party is against the sentiments of the nation. It is difficult even for the working class to accept it. To respect a great Marxist-Leninist is one thing; but to declare him as one's leader is a different matter. It is a question of principle.' Kang Sheng was more explicit, 'We cannot agree that our party is leader. Also we do not agree about your calling our Chairman your chairman. This is against principle and Mao Tse-tung thought. Our relation is fraternal and equal.'

Chou went on to say that conditions in each country differed and each revolutionary movement must find its own way. 'This is not modesty, but a statement of fact. Your path can be worked out only by you . . . . The relation between our two parties is of fraternal friendship, a relation of exchange of opinions. If you go beyond this limit, it will be against Mao Tse-tung thought. It is not right to take our party leader's name. In 1957, the Chairman said in Moscow that he was against any patriarchal party.'

For a full description of this meeting in Peking, see Shankar Ghosh's *The Naxalite Movement*, (K.I. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1974), pp. 12-23.

26. Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh, op. cit.*, p. 29.
27. See Richard Nation's 'The Economic Structure of Pakistan and Bangladesh' in Robin Blackburn (ed.), *Explosion in a Subcontinent.*
28. The original design of the new national flag contained a map of East Bengal placed in the centre of a red sun. The image of the map was later dropped, simplifying the design.
29. *Le Monde*, 31 March 1971. See also Rehman Sobhan's 'Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Contradictions of Bourgeois Society in Bangladesh' in Abdul Gaffar Choudhury (ed.), *Sheikh Mujib: A Commemorative Anthology*, (Radical Asia Books, London, 1977). 'There was a definite tendency within the party represented by the students and workers wing of the party,' writes Sobhan, 'The Students League certainly had a strong, perhaps dominant, group who thought of themselves as socialists and some even accepted a Marxist perspective. This radical group constituted the spearhead of the party and gave the party its militant edge. It had already made inroads into the labour movement and along with some working class union leaders had brought a militant working class faction into the party to reinforce the militancy of the student wing. This group had a very close bilateral line with Mujib who knew

that in any confrontation with the military it would be the students and workers who would again lead and sustain the mass movement. The real pressure on Mujib to take up uncompromising positions against the army and to openly embrace radical postures came from this significant element in his party. It is this same element which eventually broke away from the Awami League in 1972 after liberation to form the Socialist National Party [J.S.D.] and to dominate the opposition to the Awami League at the level of mass politics as distinct from underground insurgency.'

30. From an unpublished interview with this writer conducted in Dacca in June 1976. Harunur Rashid, a National Committee member of the J.S.D., became Acting General Secretary of the organization following the arrest by the Mujib Government (17 March 1974) of A.M.S. Abdur Rab, General Secretary of the J.S.D. Rab was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment in July 1976 as a co-defendant in the Taher case.

    During June 1976 this writer also had an extended discussion with Abdul Huq of the East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), and several short discussions with Mohammed Toaha of the East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). Huq and Rashid at the time were underground, while Toaha was not.
31. See 'The Taher Testimony', which follows these notes.
32. Mohammed Ayoob and K. Subramayam, *The Liberation War*, (S. Chand, New Delhi, 1972), p. 152.
33. 'Heroes of the Liberation War: Lt. Col. Abu Taher', *Bichitra* (Dacca). See also 'Chilmari Raid: Landmark In The History of War', *Bichitra*.
34. 'The Agony of Independence', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 August 1974. Also 'The Hidden Prize', *Holiday* (Dacca), 12 August 1972.
35. 'Foreign Aid vs. Self-Help', *The Business Review* (Dacca), January 1973.
36. *Ibid*.
37. 'Bangladesh: Playground For Opportunists', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 September 1974.
38. 'Letter From London', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 February 1975.
39. 'Bangladesh: Miscreant Power', *Frontier*, 6 April 1974.
40. 'Political and Organizational Report: 7th November and Subsequent Events', *Samaybad*, 4th issue, 23 February 1976, pp. 13-14.
41. Several sources interviewed in the course of this book raised questions as to whether General Zia and the country's military leadership, as it then existed, actually ordered Special Police units into action against the student demonstrators on November 9th. Some have argued that the police were acting on orders not from Army Headquarters, but from the National Security Intelligence Agency (N.S.I.) (see Part II, The Old Nexus and a New Nemesis, and Appendix D of Part II). The N.S.I. and the paramilitary police command were extremely anxious, as were other political elements identified with Mustaque and the August coup, for General Zia to make clear his stand on the politics of the insurrection. By beginning, on their own initiative, the crackdown of the 9th, the day after Zia had begun ordering the release of political prisoners, the Security Services and the political nexus connected with the August coup were immediately forcing Zia's hand to declare where he stood –

with them or with the revolutionaries (see note 8).

42. 'Political and Organizational Report: 7th November and Subsequent Events', *Samaybad*, 4th issue, 23 February 1976, p. 14.
43. Talukder Maniruzzaman, 'Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of the Mujib Regime and Its Aftermath', *Asian Survey* (Berkeley, U.S.A.), February 1976.
44. K. Maxwell, 'The Hidden Revolution in Portugal', *New York Review of Books*, 17 April 1975.
45. 'Dacca's Strongman Consolidates', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 January, 1976.
46. 'Toaha's Call', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 December 1975. Toaha's critics considered his views, which opposed class struggle within the Armed Forces, to be completely anti-Leninist, although Toaha has himself labelled his own theoretical position as Marxist-Leninist. Critics of Toaha have frequently quoted Lenin's remarks on 'the disorganization of the army' as justification for their own standpoint: 'Not a single great revolution has ever taken place or ever can take place, without the "disorganization" of the army. For the army is the most ossified instrument for supporting the old regime, the most hardened bulwark of bourgeois discipline, buttressing up the rule of capital, and preserving and fostering among the working people the servile spirit of submission and subjection to capital. Counter-revolution has never tolerated, and never could tolerate, armed workers side by side with the army. In France, Engels wrote, the workers emerged armed from every revolution: "Therefore, the disarming of the workers was the first commandment for the bourgeoisie, who were at the helm of the state." The armed workers were the embryo of a *new* army, the organized nucleus of a *new* social order. The first commandment of every victorious revolution, as Marx and Engels repeatedly emphasized, was to smash the old army, dissolve it, and replace it by a new one.' ('The Proletarian Revolution and The Renegade Kautsky', Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, 1971.)
47. Unpublished interview with Harunur Rashid, Acting General Secretary of the J.S.D., in Dacca, June 1976.
48. 'An Interview with Toaha', *Holiday* (Dacca), 17 October 1976. See also two separate and critical comments by Abed Illahi and H.A.K. Rano, 'On Mohammad Toaha's Views', *ibid*, 24 October 1976.
49. Maniruzzaman, *Asian Survey*, February 1976, pp. 126-7.
50. *The Bangladesh Times*, 31 July 1976.
51. '7th November and Subsequent Events', *Samaybad*, 4th issue, 23 February 1976.
52 'Dateline Delhi – For The Last Time', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 20 February, 1976.
53. 'The State vs. Purna Chandra (Sayem, J.)', *Dacca Law Reports (1970)*, pp. 289-92.
54. 'Martial Law 20th Amendment Regulation 1976', *The Bangladesh Times*, 31 July 1976.

Appendix to Part I: Taher's Testimony

This is the statement of Colonel Abu Taher of the Bangladesh Army delivered before the Special Martial Law Tribunal convened inside Dacca Central Jail between June 21 and July 17, 1976. The charges against Taher were treason and mutiny. The trial was held in conditions of complete secrecy. Newspapers were prohibited from reporting on what was widely considered the most important political trial in Bangladesh since its independence. This testimony is published here in spite of the ban which still exists inside Bangladesh on any details of the case.

A previous version of the testimony, less complete than the text presented here, was published in the summer of 1977. [*Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), Special Number, August 1977.] The first text, obtained from sources inside Bangladesh's Martial Law Administration who must remain anonymous, represented excerpts not the complete text of Taher's statement. In late 1977 a Bengali version of Taher's testimony began to circulate in Dacca under the title *From the Front to The Gallows*. It was more extensive and contained greater detail than the first published text. An introductory comment to the Bengali version stated that its contents still represented only excerpts from the complete statement. Taher spoke extemporaneously over a period of four days (July 12-15). His statement was taken down in long hand notes by several lawyers, co-defendants and military officials present in the hearing room. There was an official court recorder, but access to the official transscript of the trial has so far been impossible. The writer of the introduction to the Bengali version stated that Taher spoke at a rapid and powerful pace, making it at times difficult to write down every word. When confronted with two texts of the statement, it was found that certain paragraphs from the first text were more complete while other paragraphs from the second were more comprehensive. With the object of presenting the fullest, most comprehensive, and accurate statement of Taher's testimony the two texts have been edited together. Certain excerpts are still missing, but at some stage when the archives of the secret Military Tribunals are one day opened to public scrutiny, a complete and unedited text will hopefully become available.

Colonel Abu Taher:

Mr Chairman and Members of the Tribunal. The man now standing before you and the man who is accused in this court is the same person who gave his blood and sweat for the freedom of our country. It is a record of history that he risked his own life and one day those achievements will indeed be judged. The way I have felt for this country throughout all my work, thoughts, and dreams cannot be explained or expressed now.

What an irony! How can the country to which I am bound in blood deny that I am anything but a part of it. The government which I installed in power, the man to whom I gave a new lease on life, now sits before me in the form of this Tribunal. They dare to try me for treason and other fabricated accusations. The charges brought against me are malicious, baseless, unfounded, conspiratorial and utterly false. I am absolutely innocent.

It is part of the recorded document of this Tribunal that there was an uprising of soldiers in Dacca's Cantonment at my behest on the night of the 6th/7th of November 1975, and thereby the malicious objective of a group of conspirators was frustrated. Major-General Ziaur Rahman was freed from his captivity and the sovereignty of this country was preserved. If this is the act which constitutes treason, then I am guilty. If I have committed any crime, it is the crime of restoring discipline;[1] it is the crime of preserving the nation's independence and sovereignty; it is the crime of freeing the Army Chief-of-Staff from captivity; and above all, it is the crime of restoring confidence in the very existence of Bangladesh.

To establish this fact there was no need to go through the unpleasant torture and threats which have been pursued against me since the 21st June 1976. This fact is well known to Justice Sayem and his government which by our own efforts we installed on the 7th November 1975. There were agreed principles that all political prisoners be released, political activities be allowed, a general election be held, and a people's government be established. This fact is well known to my fellow countrymen who will remember it with gratitude.

It is an insult to this nation that there is now an attempt to try me inside this jail and by such an inferior court as the present one. You have no right to judge me.

Before I refute the false and concocted charges made against me, I want to take you back to the days of our heroic national independence movement. It is particularly relevant here.

I recall the night of the 25th March 1971 when the Pakistani Army unleashed brutal attacks against our people. We had no choice, but to win that war which was thrust on us. Had we lost, a worse kind of slavery would have been imposed upon us. The Pakistani Military Junta did not make it a secret when they announced in the newspapers that Bengalis did not deserve any higher education. Their education could be confined to Madrasha Education. Bengalis are unpatriotic. Their culture is inferior. They should be compelled to speak in one language – Urdu.

From the time I became conscious of the condition of our people, I was not reconciled to the concept of Pakistan. I could not accept the idea that a nation like the Bengalis were unable to form an independent sovereign state, to realise their own national hopes and aspirations. From that time onward I constantly thought and hoped for the liberation of our people and the establishment of a just homeland. I do not know how many other Bengali officers in the Pakistani Army ever thought of an Independent Bangladesh. This much I can say, for myself – this dream of independence guided all my actions as if it were a beckoning star.

In the Pakistan Army we were taught that Bengalis were a 'nation of traitors'; that they were born to serve; and that it was the pious responsibility of the Pakistanis to make the Bengalis 'pukka Muslims' and true patriots. I can still remember the intolerable way they either ignored or sneered down on us.

Those were days of trial for us who were then in West Pakistan. At that time I did not hesitate to respond to the nation's call. The barbaric purpose of the Military Junta was not unknown to us who were in West Pakistan, when from General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army the message went out: 'Burn everything, kill everyone in sight.'

I had no hestitation in escaping from Pakistan to join the Liberation War. It is not unknown to the Chairman of this Tribunal that I was not a back bencher in the Pakistan Army. I was commissioned in the Baluch Regiment and later I joined the Special Services Group, an elite para-commando force in the Pakistan Army. Six long years I served with this elite unit. As a soldier and an officer I was never afraid to fight the enemy face to face. During the Indo-Pak War, I fought on the Kashmir Front and the Sialkot Sector. I still bear wounds from that war.

I am the only Bengali officer who was awarded a Maroon Parachute Wing and I had to my credit 135 static line jumps. In recognition of my service I was sent to the United States to attend various courses. I was awarded the Ranger Award by the Ranger Training Command, Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia. I am an Honours Graduate from the Special Forces Officer Training Institute, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I might as well mention here that such service distinctions were never achieved by any Bengali officer until that time.

Let us now go back to the days of the barbaric fascist attack of the Military Junta. During the 1970 General Election I was attending a course in the U.S.A I returned to Pakistan in December when the election was over. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party, the Awami League, had won the election with an overwhelming majority. On my return I exchanged views with various quarters It was not difficult to understand that power would not be transferred to any civilian government. The Military Junta and Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto – a curse upon the politics of Pakistan – would not allow the Awami League its rightful claim to power. They were determined not to allow any Bengali to take power in Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was absolutely unacceptable and intolerable to them. I could sense dangerous omens. So in the month of February I sent my wife and family to my home town, Mymensingh. The chill of the winter was still with us.

I knew that Bengalis as a nation would not allow any injustice to go unchallenged. I knew they would resist. I felt that perhaps the days for liberating our people were coming nearer. I do not know how many of us felt that way. As the days were passing, we were undergoing rapid psychological changes and we were preparing ourselves for the inevitable.

On the 25th March I was at Quetta attending a Senior Technical Course in the School of Infantry and Tactics. As darkness fell, we came to know that serious measures were going to be taken that night in Bangladesh. I spent the entire night restless and without sleep. The whole night long I walked on the lonely roads of Quetta. I was trying to imagine what was happening. Even now I cannot conceive of the catastrophe which fell upon them that night. It was unsurpassed genocide in the heart of Bangladesh.

On the morning of 26th March we heard General Yahya Khan speak over the radio. It was a terrible moment. I could feel the birth pangs of a nation. Because of my open hatred towards the Pakistani occupation army for their action and behaviour in Bangladesh, I soon became the object of deep dissatisfaction on the part of my superiors. On the 28th March the course in the School of Infantry and Tactics was called off and we were ordered to report to our respective units.

At that time several junior officers, Lieutenants and Second Lieutenants, approached and sought my advice as to what they should do. I told them in clear terms that their sole responsibility was to their motherland and their only concern was to escape from Pakistan and join the Liberation War. They also informed me that a few senior Bengali officers who were stationed at that time in Quetta had refused to talk to them, refused to entertain them, lest their loyalty be doubted by their master. Knowing my attitude, these officers not only avoided me, they ceased speaking to me.

Some of these same senior officers I find today holding important positions in the Armed Forces and they are now a party in this attempt to try me here.[2] These officers before the 25th of March went all out to announce their acquaintance with Sheikh Mujib; after the 25th of March they termed him a traitor.

Taher at this point is interrupted by the Tribunal's Chairman. He is told he will not be permitted to read such a statement. There is shouting and arguing in the courtroom. Taher tells the Chairman, Colonel Yusuf Haider, 'If you do not give me the opportunity to depose my statement, I had better keep silent. It truly must be a heinous act on my part to argue on behalf of myself before such an inferior officer.' There are further arguments and finally, after the intervention of Taher's lawyers, he is permitted to continue.

Later, I was happy to learn that among the junior officers I had encouraged to escape, Second Lieutenant Noor and Second Lieutenant Enam were successful and joined the Liberation War. After a few days at Quetta, I was detained and charges were brought against me accusing me of expressing my displeasure at the atrocities committed in the then East Pakistan.

Due to the intervention of Major-General B.M. Mustafa, Commandant of the School of Infantry and Tactics, with whom I had a good relationship, the charges were withdrawn and I was allowed to move to the Khariar Cantonment. At Khariar I was attached to a medium regiment and not allowed to join my own unit which was brought into the then East Pakistan to kill my own people It was this unit which arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

At Khariar I convinced Captain Delwar and Captain Patwari to escape and join the war. We established contact with a Bengali engineer stationed at Mirpur in Pakistani occupied Kashmir who agreed to give us shelter and arrange transport up to the border. At the appointed date and time we reached Mirpur. Unfortunately upon our arrival, to my utter surprise, we found the engineer had left with his family and the house was locked. That was the first time I came across the unpatriotic quality of our Bengali gentry.

We spent the afternoon on the lawn of his house. At nightfall we took to the hills. My companions, Captain Delwar and Captain Patwari, were not used to rough hills and after a few hours they refused to proceed further. We were forced to come back to the Khariar Cantonment.

In West Pakistan at the time there were about 1,000 Bengali officers, I approached many of them and tried to induce them to escape and join the Liberation War. But it was unfortunate to find that the patriotism of the Bengali gentry is confined to heated drawing-room discussion. Later, when I was posted to the Baluch Regimental Centre at Abotobad, I tried to encourage the Bengali officers there to join the Liberation War.

I was fortunate that of the lot, Major Ziauddin, at that time serving at General Headquarters if Rawalpindi, agreed to escape with me. Accordingly we made a plan. With all my savings I purchased a used car by which we could reach the border. Myself and Ziauddin started from Pindi and on our way connected up with Captain Patwari from Jhelum. Since we had to pass some daylight hours, we went to Major Manzoor's house who was stationed at Sialkot Cantonment. When Manzoor came to know of our plan of escape, he remained quiet and expressed no enthusiasm. At the insistence of his wife, he at last agreed to escape with us. In this way Major Manzoor, his family, and his Bengali batman joined us. At nightfall we drove up to the border, abandone the car, and walked across the boundary and reached India.

We joined the War of Independence in the hope that we would free ourselves from all forms of exploitation and domination. We hoped to build a society based on justice. But what really happened after the War of Independence? In fact the war, the major part of which was not fought on our own soil, delivered very little to our own people. The unarmed, peace-loving, and panicstricken people of Bangladesh crossed the border in search of safety and food. Most of the surviving soldiers did the same. The leading mass organizations and political parties, particularly the Awami League, also crossed the border for the same reason. But the Awami League had a greater responsibility and duty because they had received the mandate of the people. Unfortunately, they never thought of the future an unarmed nation would face. They never prepared the people to face the dreadful possibilities which might lie ahead. A confrontation of an unarmed people against the armed might of a modern army was unquestionably foolish. But that is precisely what happened in our case. And we had to pay a heavy price for it. If the Awami leadership had sincerely thought of the future of millions of our people and if they had themselves played a courageous role, then events would have been different. It just did not happen that way.

The same goes for our soldiers. They never realized the reality of the national war they would be faced with. The result was there was no plan to fight in an unconventional method, through means of a protracted war, against one of the world's most modern, well disciplined, and well trained conventional armies. India gladly agreed to give food and shelter to our soldiers, people and children because India knew that, by so doing, her prestige and image would be raised in the sphere of international politics and diplomacy. Moreover, her policy of hegemony in the subcontinent would be strengthened. In fact, it was India who mostly benefited from the developments in Bangladesh in geo-political, economic and resource terms. This much I can say about the war – our officers and soliders were mainly carrying out the desires and strategic plans of the Indians.

On joining the Liberation War I was asked by Colonel Osmany, C-in-C of our forces, to visit different sectors and find out weaknesses in the conduct of the fighting and how to overcome them. The first sector which I visited was Sector No. 11 comprising Mymensingh and Tangail Districts. Major-General Zia, now Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator, was at that time raising a brigade in the area. The Sector was being commanded by Brigadier S. Singh [Indian Army].

It was a surprise to me that such an important sector was left to the command of an Indian officer. The importance of that sector was enormous if one was to hit Dacca. I inspected various other sectors. I mixed with the freedom fighters and exchanged my views, opinions and plans with them. We joined in together in a number of small skirmishes. It was as clear as daylight that political and military leadership was lacking and those entrusted with it were failing in their responsibilities. Our national war became almost a lost one. We were fighting a well disciplined conventional army where our enemies were militarily better educated. They had rigorous training and carried the most sophisticated array of modern weaponry. On our side we did not have any consolidated military leadership which could establish a unified command. Thus, our forces were left in a state of indecisiveness and frustration. We did not have essential training facilities, nor did we have sufficient arms and ammunition. The only reasonable option which remained to us at that stage was to develop the tactics of guerrilla warfare. Unfortunately, our commanders were preoccupied then in raising a full fledged conventional army on foreign soil. Our boys never lacked courage or patriotism, but they were unorganized and dispersed across the country in small groups, imbued only with the ideal of independence. They never anticipated Pakistan's military attack and being unprepared they fell victim to Pakistan's act of genocide.

The weaknesses in our conduct of the war could be easily pinpointed. First: we waged a war; the people waged a war; but there was no political leadership. Without political leadership, guerrilla warfare can never develop. And the Awami League failed to provide political leadership to our Liberation struggle.

Second: the command structure had no theoretical concept of guerrilla war. Few conventional officers like Colonel Osmany, Major Zia, Major Khaled, Major Shafiullah, and others, had any understanding of the organization of a guerrilla struggle. These conventional officers with their conventional military ideas were, in fact, a hindrance in the natural growth of guerrilla warfare.

Third: the existing military leadership of the Liberation War was scanty. Whatever adequately trained soldiers or officers we had were concentrated in regular force units. Independent units of freedom fighters were deprived of obtaining necessary military skills and leadership. This was due to the fact that the commanders of the Liberation Forces had no concept whatsoever of a Liberation struggle. Their only concern was to raise regular main force brigades to consolidate their own power.

They said an army of 20 divisions would be raised in due course. Meanwhile, the natural growth of a national people's war was obstructed. The freedom fighters were carrying out acts of heroism inside the country, but there was no one to inspire them. An effective farsighted leadership could have spontaneously developed inside the country, had there been no external interference. Had the two brigades of trained troops, one at Agartala under Khaled Musharraf and the other at Meghalaya under Major Zia, been correctly deployed, we could have raised 20 divisions of peasant fighters within seven or eight months within the country.

My ideas deeply annoyed Colonel Osmany. For him it was a very easy life. He had a safe shelter to sleep in and a great deal of time to move around inspecting sector headquarters. But it was a parody of a Liberation War. The leadership was simply insane. There is a great distinction between people's war and conventional war. This was not understood by Colonel Osmany. It is not correct to attempt to raise a regular force at an early stage of guerrilla struggle. At an appropriate time, a guerrilla force will be converted into a regular force. I decided to stay in Sector 11 because of its strategic importance. I considered it useless to waste time moving around different sectors. Osmani grudgingly appointed me as the Sector Commander.

Taher is interrupted again by the Tribunal. There is an argument in the court. The Tribunal orders him to finish up. Taher says: 'If you disturb me like this, it will be impossible for me to depose. I have seen many small men in my time, but none smaller than you.'

Fourth: the forces which developed spontaneously inside Bangladesh under the leadership of famous freedom fighters such as Major Afsar, Khalil, Batem, Marfat, and many others – this form was the natural development of the forces struggling in our Liberation War. Unfortunately the regular military command under Colonel Osmany and the Provisional Government looked at the development of such a force with suspicion. Consequently, there was no co-ordination between the freedom fighters developing inside the country and the conventional army.

Fifth: Under the evil influence of India's Border Security Force personnel, greed developed among some of the freedom fighters who lacked ideological understanding, and consequently they resorted to many unfortunate acts of looting and arson.

The answer to all these problems was that the Provisional Government should have shifted inside Bangladesh into a liberated area. Sector Headquarters and all officers should have left Indian territory and taken up positions inside Bangladesh. I put forward this suggestion and Major Zia readily agreed with me. We took the decision that all commands should be moved inside the border. We wanted that other sectors should do the same at an appointed time. Accordingly a conference of sector commanders was held. Colonel Osmany,Major Khaled Musharraf, and Major Shafiullah opposed the proposal. Not only were we prevented from moving sector headquarters inside Bangladesh and off Indian territory, but Major Zia's Brigade was taken away from my sector.

I was left with one Air Force officer, Flight Lieutenant Hamidullah and one battle injured officer, Second Lieutenant Mannan. Only one jeep was left for transport. At the time, Brigadier Singh [Indian Army] thought he would be able to direct us as we were left with no resources. He suggested we set up Headquarters alongside his H.Q. at Turag, which was 40 miles away from the border. I should mention here that most of sector Headquarters were well inside India. Most of our Sector Commanders used carpets to cover their tent floors.

I refused Brigadier Singh's offer and set my Sector H.Q. 800 yards off and opposite Kamalpur port. I knew well that I must concentrate on the access which would give us final victory. This access was Kamalpur, Jamalpur, Tangail and Dacca.

Here I would like to recall the memory of a heroic freedom fighter called Subedar Aftab. He was a dedicated soldier of extraordinary courage. He never left Bangladesh soil. Together with some young men he valiantly fought the Pakistani occupation army and harassed them wherever there was an opportunity. When I reached Sector 11, I was told Subedar Aftab is a rebel. He never listens to anyone's orders. He had stationed himself at a place called Kodal Kanti in Roumari Thana. He never reported to Major Zia or Brigadier Singh in spite of repeated orders. I was curious about him and I decided to go and meet this man. I walked 18 miles to reach Kodal Kanti. It was a surprise for him. He never expected to see an officer inside Bangladesh. We discussed the war situation and after an exchange of views, we found that we shared similar views on strategy. From then on together we fought as comrades-in-arms.

The Chairman of the Tribunal breaks in. Taher responds, 'These portions are *very relevant. You [speaking to the Chairman] were not in the Liberation War, how would you have any idea about freedom fighters?' Taher continues.*

Subedar Aftab informed me that he was the one who kept a vast area of Roumari Thana liberated and it remained so until the 16th December. Throughout he refused to go to Indian territory to establish a base. I spent the night talking with him. I found that he was a natural leader of men and I found myself very small in front of him.

When he said he could do anything, I proposed an attack to dislodge the Pakistanis who had entrenched themselves on an island in front of his position. There was a river between the two. The island on which the Pakistanis had taken up their position was divided in two halves by a small canal. Subedar Aftab and I crossed the river with a ferry boat and found the Pakistanis on the furthest side. The near side was covered with thick elephant grass. I advised that a company of fighters cross the river at night and take up position inside the elephant grass on the bank of the small canal. I suggested that early in the morning a small patrol should go out and allow the Pakistani forces to chase them. After four days Aftab was ready with his plan.

As expected the Pakistanis attacked after the early morning patrol. Their units were drawn within the killing zone of the freedom fighters. In the first attack the Pakistanis suffered a large number of casualties. The Pakistanis launched a second and third attack, both of which were repulsed. They panicked and abandoned the position. With this the whole of Roumari Thana right up to Bakadurab came within our position.

Next we turned our attention to Chilmari, a battle that is well known and which I commanded. It was in the middle of September. During one night 1,200 freedom fighters crossed the Brahmaputra river. The target was guarded by two companies of Pakistani regulars supplemented by a large number of Razakars. We held Chilmari under our control for 24 hours and returned with a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, and a large number of prisoners. It was a daring raid, one of those that are rare in the history of warfare.

From September onward, much of the news of the Liberation War was broadcast from the radio in our sector. Even the American journalist, Jack Anderson, noted the contribution being made in our area. He said, 'With the fall of Kamalpur the Pakistanis lost the war.' It was while leading the attack on Kamalpur that I lost my leg. Our units were the first to reach Dacca.

When speaking about the Liberation War I must mention the loyalty, the courage and the patriotism of our freedom fighters. The nation found its best people in them. I must also mention the poor and the villagers who gave us food, who gave us shelter, who supplied information on enemy positions, and who were constantly an inspiration to us. I had a weapon in my hand. They had none. In helping us they faced Pakistani bullets, their houses were burnt, and their womenfolk disgraced. They were the most courageous of all and it is to them that I will always give my deepest loyalty.

By the 16th of December Bangladesh passed into the hands of the Indian Army. This was not surprising. The carelessness, bankruptcy and inefficiency of our political and military leadership made the Provisional Government an ineffective force. This made possible the interference of the Indians. Our regular forces were psychologically weak and subservient because of the reliance of bases located in Indian territory. When the Indian Army entered the sacred soil of Bangladesh, they grabbed everything they could put their hands on, like a typical victorious army.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Tribunal, I can describe here with some pride the example of one commanding officer who dared to challenge this plundering by the Indian Army. He is Major M.A. Jalil, the commander of the 9th Sector. He is also a co-accused in this case. Jalil had to pay a high price for his action. For carrying out his patriotic responsibilities he was jailed and spent many days behind bars. After his acquittal from the charges which had been brought against him, he carried out another historic responsibility. Together with A.S.M. Abdur Rab, the representative of the young revolutionaries (he too is a co-accused in this case). Major Jalil organized the first opposition party in Bangladesh – the J.S.D. I should mention here that it was A.S.M. Abdur Rab who was the first person to raise our national flag on the 2nd of March 1971 at the historic *Bot-tala* gathering. I shall also mention with pleasure that I was the Chairman of the Tribunal which tried and acquitted Major Jalil.

At this stage I would like to mention a few words about my brothers who are co-accused in this case. There appears to be a deliberate attempt to victimize our family. My brother, Abu Yusuf Khan, an accused in this case, was in Saudi Arabia on deputation with the Saudi Air Force when the Liberation War broke out. He escaped and joined the battle in our sector. No matter how it may sound today, I will say there were many Bengali officers at that base, but no others escaped to join the war. Instead they returned to West Pakistan and were later repatriated to Bangladesh in 1973. My brother distinguished himself in the battle of Jamalpur and was awarded the Bir Bikram. He was the first one to reach the Pakistani Command Headquarters on the 16th of December and obtained the surrender of General Niazi. He is the proud possessor of General Niazi's car pennant. To me it seems the world has known few better men.

My brother, Anwar, is also an accused in this case. He is a lecturer at Dacca University. During the Liberation War he was a staff officer at Sector 11 H.Q. He is the type who would refuse to have a second shirt just because a freedom fighter or a refugee needed one. I must also mention my brother, Bahar, whom we recently lost along with three other heroic boys due to the treachery of the present government. He commanded a company of more than 200 boys and by November had liberated the major part of Netrakona Sub-Division. Due to his exceptional bravery he was twice awarded the gallantry award Bir-Pratik. He, too, is our national hero. My brother Belal, who also could not escape the treachery of this government, has been brought here as a accused. He was awarded the Bir-Pratik twice. Six brothers and two sisters – we all took part in the Liberation War. I was awarded the Bir-Uttam for my contribution. In recognition of our contribution, four of us were decorated with military honours. It is all a record of history. Also due to our involvement in the struggle our village was burned and ransacked. My father was taken into custody and persecuted by the occupation forces. However, I would like to express here my gratitude to Brigadier Quader, a Pakistani officer, who intervened and released my father from custody.

After the return of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the withdrawal of the Indian Army, it was hoped that national reconstruction work would be given the highest priority and that the work of building a society based on justice would begin. We hoped that a developed self-reliant Bangladesh would emerge where there would be no exploitation of man by man and where there would be no corruption. We hoped that our country would be defended by an army which would not behave toward the masses as a mercenary army. We hoped that our army would be an inseparable part of our production system. It is for these hopes that our people and this nation time and time again struggled so hard. It was in these hopes that our ideals and values were expressed. But they were never accomplished. Before anyone could realize, the degeneration started.

In the month of April 1972, after all necessary treatment following the amputation was completed, I returned to Bangladesh. I rejoined the Bangladesh Army in the position of Adjutant-General. I reinforced discipline in the Army when it was a difficult task. The Chairman of this Tribunal is a witness to how I initiated disciplinary proceedings against certain senior officers, such as Brigadier Mir Sawkat and Major-General Shafiullah concerning certain illegalities. There were accusations that they illegally acquired money, wealth and property. My position was that everything any officer had illegally acquired must be returned, so that they may stand up as brave and clean men before the nation's freedom fighters. The situation was indeed very delicate.

I never compromised with these principles. Within a few months I was posted as the new Commander of the 44th Brigade at Comilla. On assuming command of the Comilla Brigade, I asked my officers to return everything they had illegally acquired during and after the Liberation War. My officers complied with my orders and I had a set of officers whose consciences were completely clear.

This is what I regarded as leadership. I always sought to appeal to what was good in men. I detested and avoided taking advantage of the weakness of an individual or of our nation.

The experience of the War of Independence, and the experience at Dacca and Comilla Cantonments, inspired me to organize a Revolutionary People's Army [R.P.A.], as opposed to an anti-production oriented standing army. During my career as a soldier, I realized that a standing army was a burden on the national economies of developing and underdeveloped countries. This form of an army is an obstacle to any social progress. It makes no contribution whatsoever to national production. The sense of loyalty, dedication and sacrifice that I saw among the freedom fighters during our Liberation War, convinced me that it was not an impossible task to build such a production oriented Revolutionary People's Army in post-Liberation Bangladesh. More than ever I was inspired by this concept.

My efforts at the Comilla Brigade to raise and organize an Army on the lines of a 'people's army' is well-known among different sections of the Army. I constantly tried to develop a strong army based on those who had fought for freedom. Our organizing principle was that of a 'productive army' where officers and men worked as do peasants and workers. We ploughed our fields, grew our own food, and went to the villages to join in production. This was the path to self-reliance. It is with happiness that I recall that, within a very short time, my officers in the Comilla Brigade understood these principles and turned our unit into a productive force.

But soon differences arose. On one side the Mujib government utteriy neglected the development of the Army and instead began to recruit the notorious paramilitary force called the Rakkhi Bahini. Indian officers and advisors were directly involved in the organization of the Rakkhi Bahini. I expressed my complete opposition to the concerned quarters. I also protested to the then Prime Minister about the secret treaty which was signed with India during the war.

In Army Headquarters there is documentary evidence of my protest. It is on these two points and due to my insistence on a complete and total departure from the existing colonial pattern of the Army that differences arose within the government. Differences between the government and Lieutenant Colonel Ziauddin also soon emerged. As a consequence Lieutenant-Colonel Ziauddin and myself found it necessary to dissociate ourselves from the Army. This occurred in the month of November 1972, Subsequently Ziauddin and I chose our own respective political lines, each going our own way. Whenever possible, we kept in touch with each other, and apprised each other of developments in the overall situation.

In 1973 I took up a job with the Ministry of Flood Control and Water Resources as Director of the Dredger Organization. I took the job at a time when the organization had already been absolutely shattered due to corruption and mismanagement. Within a short time we revived the organization which achieved its highest income since its creation in 1952. From the watchman to the Superintendent of Engineers you can ask how I was running that organization.

Taher says, following an interruption of his statement: Mr. Chairman and the Honourable Members of this Court – I must bring everything out. It will bring you close to me . . .'

The role of the Awami League government until 15th August 1975 is known to all. How the democratic institutions, one after the other, were being demolished, and how the democratic rights of the people were ruthlessly suppressed is a matter of record. In short, all our cherished goals, ideals and values were destroyed one after the other. Democracy was given an indecent burial. The people were trampled on and a fascist dictatorship was imposed on the whole nation.

In the womb of fascist repression there slowly developed an anti-fascist mass resistance movement. It was really tragic and painful to see Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leading personality among the founders of this state, emerge as a dictator. Mujib in his chequered political career had never compromised with autocracy or dictatorship. He was once the symbol of democracy and the national independence movement. With all his shortcomings, he was the only leader who had links with the masses and who had a broad base among the masses. In return the people accepted him as their leader. It is the people who glorified Mujib and magnified his image as a hero. In fact, people thought of Mujib as they dreamed he should be. The very name Mujib was a war cry in our Independence War. Sheikh Mujib was the leader of the masses. To deny this is to deny a fact. In the final analysis it should have been the masses who should have decided his fate. The best path would have been for the people to have risen and overthrown Mujib for deceiving them. It is my firm conviction that the people who installed Mujib as their leader would have destroyed Mujib the dictator. The people granted no rights to anyone to intrigue or conspire.

On the 15th August 1975, Sheikh Mujib was killed by a group of officers and a section of the Army. On that day early in the morning an officer from the Second Field Artillery rang me up and gave me a message which he said came from Major Rashid. He asked me to go to Bangladesh Betar (Bangladesh Radio). He also informed me of the killing of Sheikh Mujib. I was told that Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed, a close associate of the late President, and a member of the Awami League, was leading the officers.

I turned on the radio and came to know that Sheikh Mujib had been killed and that Khondakar Mustaque had taken power. This was shocking news to me. I thought it would create political instability and that in this situation we could even lose our influence. Meanwhile, several telephone calls came urging me to go to Bangladesh Betar. I thought I should go and see the situation.

At 9 a.m. in the morning, I reached Bangladesh Betar. On reaching there I was taken by Major Rashid to a room where I found Khondakar Mustaque and Taheruddin Thakur along with Major Dalim and Major-General M. Khalilur Rahman. I had a brief discussion with Khondakar Mustaque and emphasized that the need of the hour was to protect the country's independence. I was taken to another room by Major Rashid where he asked me whether I would like to join the Cabinet. I told him to get hold of all the Chiefs of the Defence Forces, discuss the problems with them, and to reach a suitable solution. Major Rashid insisted that I, together with Lieutenant-Colonel Ziauddin, could save the situation and that he had no faith in any service chief or any politician. I rejected the offer and advised him that no BAKSAL leaders should be taken into any cabinet and I said an all-party government composed of all patriotic political parties should be formed.

I placed the following proposals before Khondakar Mustaque for implementation: 1) immediate abrogation of the constitution;[5] 2) the declaration and enforcement of martial law throughout the country; 3) release of all political detainees irrespective of party affiliation; 4) formation of an all party democratic national government, excluding the BAKSAL; 5) arrangements for an immediate general election for a constituent assembly-cum-parliament. Khondakar Mustaque gave a patient hearing to my proposals and promised to take necessary steps. Rashid kept insisting I attend the swearing in ceremony of Khondakar Mustaque at Banga Bhavan. At 11:30 I left Bangladesh Betar with a feeling of deep concern. I sensed Mustaque would not keep his word and would probably do otherwise. I also sensed that this was not an affair of Mustaque alone or some officers. There seemed to be someone else's hand pulling the strings.

This became clear to me very soon. In his broadcast to the nation Mustaque mentioned nothing of the proposals I had discussed with him. When I reached Banga Bhavan at mid-day, the swearing in ceremony was over. In the evening I sat down with the officers who were involved in the killing. They were headed by Major Rashid. I once again put forward to them the suggestions I had made to Mustaque that morning and I insisted that the release of all political prisoners must be done immediately before any firm course of action could be decided.

During the latter part of our discussion, I called General Zia to join in. All agreed with my discussions and considered it the only suitable course open for the time being. The next day I had a long discussion with Major-General Shafiullah and Major-General M. Khalilur Rahman. They all agreed to what I had recommended.

But at that stage on the 16th of August, I realized that Major Rashid and Major Farooq were using my name opportunistically to give their troops the impression that I was with them. On the 17th of August it became clear to me that the whole game was backed by the United States of America and Pakistan. I also understood that Khondakar Mustaque, backed by a faction of the upper echelon of the Awami League, was directly involved in the killing of Sheikh Mujib. This group, it was also clear, had a pre-determined course set for themselves. From the 17th onwards I stopped going to the Ganga Bhavan and severed all relations with this group.

General Osmany was appointed Military Advisor to Khondakar Mustaque and kept in close touch with me. He took me along with him to various places in Bangladesh and constantly enquired about Lt.-Colonel Ziauddin and showed his eagerness to meet him. I told him that the government first must withdraw the death warrant which had been issued against Ziauddin's life by the Mujib government, and that all charges must be dropped. Only then could Ziauddin meet him.

In the last part of September, Major Rashid brought a message from President Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed that I and Lt.-Colonel Ziauddin should form a political party and that he would provide all facilities of finance. I rejected his proposal and sent back word that I insisted upon the release of all political prisoners. It was clear that Mustaque had absolutely no political base. But for a small faction, he had no support in the Army as a whole, and he had no support among the people.

Let us now turn our attention to the Mustaque government. The Mustaque government could not offer a better alternative than the Mujib government. The only change that occurred was that the country, from having been under the hegemony of Indo-Soviet influence, passed over to the hegemony of American imperialism. The entire situation in the country otherwise remained the same. No effective measures were taken to regain the confidence of the masses. Political repression was increased. The ruthlessness of the law enforcement agencies grew immensely. The harassment and sufferings of the people continued. The arrest of political workers was as usual. In the truest sense, the country was plunged from a civilian dictatorship into a military-bureaucratic dictatorship.

The people were restless. They could never accept such a situation. Indo-Soviet agents and social forces unacceptable to the masses were waiting to turn the situation to their purpose. Taking advantage of the Mustaque government's failures, a conspiracy was organized threatening our national interest. The ambitious Brigadier Khaled Musharraf led the conspiracy and, by a counter-revolutionary coup d'etat, seized power on the 3rd November 1975.

On that day I was ill and confined to bed at my house in Narayanganj. Yet, early in the morning of that day at 4 o'clock, I received a telephone call. It was Major-General Ziaur Rahman who implored me to help him. We could not finish our talk – the line was cut. On the same day many soldiers, N.C.O's and J.C.O's came to my Narayanganj house. I was unable to speak with all of them but I talked with a few in my room. They informed me that Khaled Musharraf's coup was backed by the Indians and that BAKSAL forces were attempting to take power again. They also informed me that tensions between the Bengal Regiment and the core troops were rising very high. At any moment there could be shooting.

I advised them to remain calm, establish quick contact among the soldiers, and to exchange opinions among themselves regarding the situation. I told them to remain vigilant against any anti-national forces jeopardizing our national existence. I also told them in clear terms that the duty of every member of the Armed Forces was to defend the frontiers and the territorial integrity of the republic. In a society like ours the Armed Forces have no business whatsoever interfering in state affairs. Behind the coups and counter-coups lay a power struggle between ambitious officers. These officers did not understand anything beyond their own self-interest, and to achieve their selfish objectives they were using the ordinary soldiers as pawns. It is the people who are to decide how the country should be run. I asked the soldiers to go back to the barracks, not to shoot each other whatever the provocation, and to remain prepared to strike simultaneously to express our solidarity with the masses. This was the only way to frustrate the ambitions of power hungry military men.

The terrifying and anarchic situation through which our nation was passing after the 3rd November is well known to all. The manner in which our national self-respect was violated needs no further elaboration here. It was apparent to the people that Khaled was backed by India. What a pathetic sight it was to see Rear Admiral M.H. Khan and Air Vice-Marshal M.G. Tawab place the badges of a Major-General's rank on Khaled Musharraf while the sovereignty of the country was at stake. I pity these small minded men. When these cowards fell on their knees begging for their lives, we had to move to keep up the spitit and sense of initiative in the nation. And Ziaur Rahman? He was trembling helplessly in Khaled's captivity. Where were Tawab and Khan then? They were busy licking the boots of their new master. This nation cannot afford to keep such cowards in the service of their armed forces.

On the afternoon of the 4th November a message reached me from Major-General Zia through one of his relatives. He appealed to me to use my influence with the troops to rescue him and save the sovereignty of the country. I sent word to him to remain calm and gather courage. I also assured him that discipline in the Armed Forces would be restored soon, and there would be an end to all underhanded actions. In the meantime our vigilant soldiers and officers requested that I should take certain necessary decisions and plan the overthrow of the treacherous Khaled Musharraf clique. The highest initiative in this regard came from the soldiers, particularly the NCOs and JCOs.

After intense consultation and contact among our forces, plans were made to carry out the necessary steps. On the 6th of November I appealed through representatives of all units in the Dacca Cantonment for the troops to remain alert and to wait for instructions. Everyone was on full alert on the late evening of the 6th of November. The uprising was to be carried out in the early hours of the dawn of the 7th of November at 1 a.m. Our decisions were: 1) to oust the Khaled Musharraf clique from power; 2) to free Ziaur Rahman from captivity; 3) to establish a Revolutionary Military Command Council; 4) to release all political detainees irrespective of party designation; 5) to withdraw all warrants of arrest on political workers; 6) to form an all-party democratic national government excluding BAKSAL; and 7) to accept and implement the Twelve Point Demands of the Revolutionary Soldiers Organization (Biplopi Shainik Sangstha).

All went according to plan. The radio, T.V., telegraph, post office, airport, and other important centres were captured at the first instance. At dawn, Zia was rescued and taken to the Second Field Artillery Headquarters. I, along with my elder brother, Flight-Sergeant Abu Yusuf Khan, went to the Cantonment at about 3 a.m. There were truckloads of soldiers all around.

I found Zia in his night dress with Brigadier Mir Shawkat and a few other officers and troops. Zia embraced me, embraced my brother and, with tears in his eyes, expressed his gratitude for saving him. He said he owed his life to me and the efforts of the J.S.D. He was so grateful he promised to do whatever we asked. We then had some discussions regarding the course of action to be taken, and reached Betar Bhavan (Radio Bangladesh) at about 4 a.m. On our way we discussed the immediate measures to be taken.

The Tribunal interrupts Taher. There are arguments in the Court. Taher says: 'You must listen to what I have to say. Otherwise I will not make any statement. Hang me . . . Hang me now . . . I have no fear. But don't disturb me . . . From where did we leave off Sharif?' He continued with his statement.

In the meantime radio announcements were made about the Soldiers' Uprising and Zia was proclaimed as Chief Martial Law Administrator [C.M.L.A.] On our way to the radio Zia agreed to address a mass gathering at the Shahid Minar (Martyrs Memorial). I had accordingly instructed the sepoys to assemble at the Shahid Minar where a mass meeting would be addressed by Zia and myself, so that no one would be able to go back on the commitment they had made to the Revolutionary Soldiers – the soldiers who, minus their officers, had protected the sovereignty of the country.

I set the time for the meeting at Shahid Minar for 10 o'clock. The soldiers out of joy were moving through the town and I thought it would take some time to gather. Thousands of jubilant people danced in the streets shouting slogans along with the Revolutionary Soldiers. Flowers were everywhere. The capital was in a festive mood with thousands celebrating.

At 8.30 I was informed by the troops that Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed had entered Bangladesh Radio and was attempting to make a speech. I went to the radio station. I told Mustaque in clear terms that the days of political conspiracy were over and that he must leave the radio station immediately. He complied with my orders and left.

After that I went to the Cantonment to bring Zia to address the meeting. When I reached there, I found the atmosphere was a little changed. Zia had shaved and was in uniform. He seemed to have recovered from the shock of his captivity. When I told him that it was time to go to the Shahid Minar, he refused – although very politely. He pleaded that he was a soldier and that he need not go out and speak in a public meeting. He asked me to go and address the troops. Instead I sent a message to the Shahid Minar for the troops to return to the Cantonment.

At 11 o'clock we held a meeting at Headquarters. We decided in principle to form an interim government. Present at that meeting were myself, Zia, Tawab, M.H. Khan, Khalilur Rahman, Osmany, and the Principal Secretary Mahbub Alam Chashi.[4] A legal question arose over the continuity of the government. The others wanted Justice Sayem to be the President of the country. [Sayem had been appointed by Khaled Musharraf on 5th November.] I agreed to that, but wanted Zia to be the Chief Martial Law Administrator. After some discussion in which Zia balked at becoming C.M.L.A., it was decided that he, along with Tawab and M.H. Khan, would each be appointed Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators. It was not decided in that meeting that they would hold charge of any ministry. Justice Sayem as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator along with his three Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators would form an advisory council. But, most important of all, it was decided that all political prisoners were to be released.

After a discussion with political leaders, political activities were to be allowed and a general election held much earlier than had been promised by President Khondakar Mustaque. Sayem would be running only an interim government. I asked the meeting to endorse the programme of the 7th November uprising.

In the afternoon I went to the radio station. The soldiers who had taken part in this revolution wanted me present when they handed over their 'Twelve Points' to Major-General Zia. From the radio station I telephoned Ziaur Rahman and informed him of the soldiers' wish. At the time the troops were so excited they did not allow anyone inside the radio station. In the evening at about 7.45 Sayem and Mustaque, who accompanied Zia, were not allowed inside the radio station. Only after representatives of the Revolutionary Soldiers had handed the Twelve Points to Zia who acknowledged his agreement by signing a copy, were Sayem and Mustaque permitted inside.

Major-General Zia and myself sat down in the T.V. room of Radio Bangladesh and watched Khondakar Mustaque and Sayem speak to the nation. Sayem spelled out clearly the principles which had been argued upon in the earlier meeting. In keeping with these principles, on the 8th of November 1975, Major Jalil and A.S.M. Abdur Rab were released from prison. On the 8th I rang up General Zia thanking him for this act and insisted that Matin, Ohidur and other prisoners be released on the same day.

On 8th of November, in the evening, I was informed by Zia that there were some incidents involving the killing of officers. I offered him all necessary help in bringing this situation under control. I also offered to move immediately up to the Cantonment and informed him that my orders to the soldiers taking part in the revolution had been that no officer should be hurt in this manner. Until the 11th of November Major-General Zia kept in constant contact with me. After the 12th I found he was unavailable, and all contact was lost. Whenever I tried to contact him, he avoided me.

On the 23rd of November, a large police contingent surrounded the house of my older brother, Flight Sergeant Abu Yusuf Khan, and took him to the police control room. When I came to know about this, I rang up Major-General Zia and was told that he was not available. Instead of him, Major-General Ershad, the Deputy Chief of Staff talked with me. When I informed him about the arrest of my brother, he said that it was a police action and they knew nothing about it. At that time I did not know that Major Jalil, A.S.M. Abdur Rab, and other J.S.D. leaders and workers were also being rounded up by the police. When I learned of it, it became very clear to me that a new conspiracy had taken control of those we had brought to power on November 7th.

On 24th November I was surrounded by a large contingent of police. The police officer asked me to accompany him to have a discussion with Zia. I said I was surprised, and I asked him why there was need of a police guard for me to go to Zia. Anyway they put me in a jeep and drove me straight to this jail. This is how I was put inside this jail by those traitors whom I saved and brought to power.

Zia not only betrayed me, he betrayed the Revolutionary Soldiers and went back on the commitments he made on the 7th, indeed he has betrayed the entire nation. We were stabbed in the back. Compared to Khaled Musharraf, Zia proved to be the other side of the same coin.

In our history, there is only one example of such treachery. It was the treachery of Mir Zafar who betrayed the people of Bangladesh and the subcontinent and led us into slavery for a period of 200 years. Fortunately for us it is not 1757. It is 1976 and we have revolutionary soldiers and a revolutionary people who will destroy the conspiracy of traitors like Ziaur Rahman.

Once more Taher is stopped by the Tribunal. Procedures are stopped by arguments in the court. Taher declares: 'You have no power to hang me. No power to convict or acquit me.'

After a few days in the Central Jail, I was flown by helicopter to Rajshahi Central Jail. There I was put in solitary confinement. My family members were not allowed to see me until today. And although I have been in prison, I have still been able to sense the pulse of the country. It is presently passing through a deep crisis. The country is faced with two immediate problems. One is that a large number of workers of a particular political party went over to India and started carrying out armed action along our border.[5] The second is India's stopping of the flow of water down the Ganges by use of the Farakka Barrage. Both these actions were a direct threat to the sovereignty and economy of our country. In spite of my incarceration, my solitary confinement, and the accompanying harrassment, I did not fail to register my protest against this threat. On the 10th May of 1976 I wrote a letter to the President of the country which I would like to read out to this court.

Taher is not allowed by the court to read the letter. The Tribunal also says it will not allow him to give his statement unless he promises to cut it short. After the intervention by Taher's senior lawyers, he was allowed to speak. Taher's Advocate said to the Court: 'Please allow him. It is the discretion of the Tribunal not to, but because he is the principal accused, he must be allowed, no matter how elaborately, to make clear his contention before you.'

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members of the Court, my letter to the President is the manifesto of a man's desire to protect the sovereignty of his country from foreign aggression. I am a free man. I have earned that freedom by my deeds. The high walls of this jail, solitary confinement, and handcuffs, cannot take away that freedom.

On the 22nd of May I was flown from Rajshahi, brought into this jail, and kept in solitary confinement. The whole jail was surrounded by a mysterious silence. Since my arrival I had heard that I would be tried by a Military Tribunal inside this jail, and that a special Military Tribunal Law was promulgated just for this purpose. On 15th June the present Chairman of the Tribunal visited me in the jail. I refused to attend because a Military Tribunal inside a jail is only an instrument of the government to commit crimes in the name of justice. On the 21st of June, four lawyers came to my cell and assured me on behalf of the Tribunal that justice would be done and the Tribunal would function without intimidation from the government. Only on that assurance did I agree to appear before this court.

But I would like to mention here that the ordinance under which this Tribunal is constituted is illegal. It was promulgated on 15th June 1976. Yet, the Tribunal itself was constituted well before the promulgation of the ordinance; otherwise, how could the Tribunal have visited the jail on the 15th June? Moreover, the preparation of the court room inside the jail began on the 12th of June.

And here I am. I was not allowed to consult my defence counsel. I did not have any opportunity to inspect the charge sheet. Not a single member of my family has yet been able to see me. The way this trial has been conducted – the less said the better. The whole thing has been done so hastily and in such a frightened manner that anyone would be shocked.

I have been accused with certain civilians of conspiring since July 1974 to overthrow a government established by law, and of creating dissension and indiscipline in the Armed Forces. I have also been accused of overthrowing the government on the 7th of November. And I have been accused of not being a patriotic citizen. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Tribunal, I do not want to go into the merits of these allegations made against me. The allegations are so utterly false and fabricated that I have no desire to say anything whatsoever about them. Those who suffered at the hands of the Awami League government can clearly remember the condition of the country prior to the overthrow of that regime. Mass oppression, economic bureaucracy, a complete breakdown of order leading to anarchy, and the denial of democratic and human rights were the order of the day. In such an adverse political situation, the J.S.D. and other mass organizations were trying hard to build up an anti-fascist democratic movement. Where were the princes and heroes of patriotism at that time? Where was Ziaur Rahman? Where was Musharraf Khan and M.G. Tawab? What were they doing?

I am accused of conspiring to overthrow a government established by law. But who killed Mujib and his family and overthrew his government? Who came to power by Mujib's killing? Who became the Chief of Army Staff with the fall of Mujib? Did any of the accused sitting here accomplish all this? Or, is it the people sitting before me – you and the others who are carrying out the orders of those now in power – who are in fact the greatest beneficiaries of Mujib's killing?

I have been accused of creating dissension and indiscipline in the Army. But, on the 15th of August and the 3rd of November, what happened in the Army? Who were those majors who were giving orders to senior officers?[6] After the November 3rd coup, who disrupted the chain of command in the Army? To whom did the imprisoned Zia appeal for his life? Of course, under my direction, Zia was rescued by an uprising. Our principal task was to defend and consolidate our national independence and sovereignty. In accomplishing this we had to organize the soldiers and make them politically conscious. I am proud to say that I have been successful in this and that we saved the nation and the Armed Forces from a great catastrophe.

I have been accused of overthrowing a legal government. Yes, this is very true! Who came to power before the 7th of November? Whom did Khaled Musharraf represent? Who arrested Zia? Whose downfall did the frightened people pray for? To ensure our national independence and to give a new sense of direction to our nation, we along with the masses and the Revolutionary Sepoys overthrew the traitor Khaled Musharraf. It has been alleged that I am not a patriotic citizen. A man who gave his blood, even a part of his body for the freedom of his motherland – what else do you demand of him? In what other way can I demonstrate my allegiance to my country? To keep our frontiers free, to uphold the nation's self-respect, and the honour of the Armed Forces – a crippled man risked his whole life in organizing the historic Soldiers Uprising. What other forms of allegiance do you want from me?

It is for these reasons that I have asked the Tribunal to summon Major-General Ziaur Rahman, Rear-Admiral M.H. Khan, Air-Vice Marshal M.G. Tawab, and General M.A.G. Osmany, and Justice A.S.M. Sayem. If they all would have been here, if this Tribunal had the power to summon them all here, then I am certain they would not have dared to face such lies and false accusations. But this Tribunal has utterly failed in discharging its responsibility.

A law is not a law unless it is a good law aiming at the good of the people and the good of the country. The ordinance promulgated on 15th June 1976 is a black law. It was promulgated merely to suit the designs of the government. The ordinance is illegal. So this Tribunal ceases to have any right legally or morally to try me.

I would like to describe the events which have occurred since the 21st day of June 1976, the day this trial opened.

Taher is not allowed to give this section of his statement. He says he has never seen men of such low integrity as the Chairman and the members of the Tribunal.

The action of this Tribunal has put to shame what good things human civilization has achieved through constant endeavour from the beginning of time until today.

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I have stated in detail what occurred on the night of the 6th/7th of November and also the day of the 7th. This Tribunal will understand now as to why I have asked for Sayem, Zia, M.H. Khan, Tawab and Osmany to appear as witnesses. Let them come and say if there be anything that is not true in what I have stated to this Tribunal.

I would like to say a few words about the military personnel who have been brought here along with me as accused. I have a responsibility towards them. They should have been tried, if they are accused of any offence, under the Army Act and Service Rules. I was one of the top ranking officers in the Bangladesh Army in its formative period. It pains me to see that now this Military Junta, in order to achieve their malicious design, will sacrifice such an important part of our army and thereby disable the Armed Forces. We can be proud of these young men and their heroism.

This nation of 75 million people can never die. The people of Bangladesh are a heroic people. The lesson and sense of direction that they have gathered from the 7th November Uprising will guide them in all their future actions. It has been able to infuse an indomitable courage into our people. I am proud of whatever I have done. I am not afraid. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I will only say that I love my country and my people. I am part of the soul of this nation. No one dare separate us. There is no greater asset in life than the possession of a fearless mind. And I have that. I offer a call to my nation to acquire the same determination.

Long Live Revolution!
Long Live My Country!

Abu Taher was hanged at 4 a.m. on the morning of July 21, 1976 in Dacca Central Jail.

Notes and References

1. Taher repeatedly states in his testimony that the Uprising on the 7th 'restored discipline'. The ironic emphasis he placed on this point is to be understood within the context of repeated references in the government's charge sheet and Chief Prosecutor, A.T.M. Afzal's accusations that Taher was guilty of spreading gross indiscipline in the Armed Forces. As he makes clear in the rest of his statement, the so-called 'indiscipline' originated at the top of the officer corps via coups and counter-coups, and that the Uprising of the 7th was out to impose the 'discipline' of the sepoys and the lower ranks, functioning through Soldiers' Committees, upon the indiscipline of the competing factions of the officer corps.
2. Following the 1972 Simla Agreements between India and Pakistan under which 90,000 captured Pakistani Army personnel were returned to Pakistan, there followed in 1973-4 the repatriation of nearly 1,000 Bengali army officers and 28,000 sepoys from Pakistan. On their return to Bangladesh, many were required to explain in detail their activities during the civil war period. Several senior officers, who had had clear opportunities to defect due to overseas postings, but did not, were removed from army service. A number of repatriated officers who were allowed to remain in service were often put into positions subordinate to soldiers who had been below them in rank in the old days of the Pakistan Army. The criteria after independence for rank and seniority in the Bangladesh Army was the role officers and sepoys had played in the War of Liberation. Following Mujib's death and the suppression of the November 7th Uprising, this trend was reversed with repatriated officers,

who had played no role in the Independence War, taking over the major share of top brigade and middle echelon positions. Colonel Yusuf Haider, Chairman of the Military Tribunal, was precisely in this mould. No Mukti Bahini officer would agree to sit as a Tribunal member in the Taher trial.

3. In the period between August 15 and November 3, 1975, various criticisms of the Mujib regime began appearing in the Bangladesh press. Among the most prominent of these critiques was that he had arbitrarily amended the Constitution in 1975 by passing the 4th Amendment, abolishing the position of Prime Minister, and turning the form of the state into an authoritarian-style presidential system. A common demand being made of the new regime, even from among its outspoken supporters, such as the newspaper *Holiday*, was that Mustaque should abrogate the Constitution, dissolve Parliament, hold new elections, and restore the democratic provisions of the Constitution which Mujib had abrogated. Mustaque had refused to make any firm commitments on any of these demands and evaded making any until the day he was overthrown. The demands for the 'abrogation of the Constitution' and the election of a new 'constituent assembly cum parliament' put by Taher to Mustaque were thus precisely the main issues which would dominate public discussion in the immediate post-Mujib period.
4. Later accounts from Bangladesh military sources claimed that it was Chashi who persuaded Zia at this stage to change course and disassociate himself from any commitments to the political path of The Twelve Demands. (See note 8, Part I).
5. Taher is referring to pro-Mujib elements of the Awami League and BAKSAL who fled to India and, with the assistance of the New Delhi authorities, set up border bases for armed operations. See *The Washington Post*, 11 December 1975.
6. Taher is referring here to the tension which developed between Zia and Khaled in the August 15-November 3 1975 period over Zia's refusal to act against the Majors and restore the chain of command. Taher is again pointing to the hypocrisy of the charge being made against him in noting that it was Zia who had refused Khaled's demands that discipline in command be restored. (See note 2, Part I).

Part II: The Murder of Mujib

Murder at Midnight

On the night of 14 August 1975 Bangladesh's capital city, Dacca, settled down to one of those hot sweltering monsoon nights that blow up each summer from the Bay of Bengal. The town was quiet and the political talk in the tea shops that day was about the President's speech planned for the next morning at Dacca University. Life had been going from bad to worse and people wondered if one of the leftist underground parties might try and make trouble during the university ceremony the next day. Otherwise, the evening did not seem much different from many others that summer. Bangladesh and the painful ✓ drama of its birth had long faded from the world focus it once inhabited.

As much as the outside world concerned itself at all with the subcontinent, attention was focused on India. There Indira Gandhi was making news as she had never done before by packing off tens of thousands of her political opponents to prison, forcibly sterilizing seven million people, bulldozing bustees in the cities and arresting beggars in a bizarre rendition of the Congress Party's latest method of 'abolishing poverty'. She called it, somewhat self-righteously, an 'Emergency'. Thus the world, if it noticed South Asia at all that summer, watched India and Indira Gandhi riding out her political rage. ✓

However, on that August evening, life in Dacca took a sudden turn. Just after midnight the Bengal Lancers and the Bangladesh Armoured Corps slowly trundled out of the capital's main cantonment towards the runways of the abandoned half-built second airport on the capital's edge. There was nothing unusual in this. The Lancers regularly did night manoeuvres and that night they were on schedule. As they lined up in formation on the main runway, the Commanding Officer of the column, Major Farooq, stood on a tank and told his men what was on his mind: tonight, he said, they would overthrow the regime of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was a fire-eating speech. The Major told his troops what was their new duty; what was the depth of their rage; and what he proposed as the latest course for Bangladesh's 'national salvation'. By the time Farooq had finished they were ready to go. They moved out and split into three columns. Within three hours Mujib and more than forty members of his family were dead.

Half a world away that day, in the most secure hearing room on Capitol Hill, the windowless penthouse normally used by the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, U.S. Senator Frank Church's Select Committee on U.S.

Intelligence Activities had the American people riveted to their televisions and newspapers, as the Committee slowly pulled the wraps off the covert empire of American power. It was the summer when Americans first heard acronyms like MONGOOSE, COINTELPRO, AM/LASH and elaborate details of assassination plots againt Lumumba in the Congo, Castro in Cuba and Allende in Chile. The covert hand of American power had touched far and wide. Now for the first time the tip of the iceberg was emerging for Americans to take a look at. But all that was happening far away in Washington, in a muggy heat as sultry as any South Asian monsoon.

In New Delhi on that same day, it was India's Independence Day, and celebrations were getting underway. Indira Gandhi ascended the Red Fort in the old city, the venue where her own father, Jawarhalal Nehru, had spoken of his country's 'tryst with destiny'. Now, with many of her father's old colleagues behind bars, she stood on the famed spot at the Fort and defended herself in the same worn phrases which she would repeat again and again for more than a year until the general election swept her stunningly from office.

That day press reporters in Delhi returned to their offices to tap out the standard Independence Day story, garnished with a bit of the Emergency's credo. It was then that the news of Mujib's death came over the wires. It hit everyone head on. Suddenly the nationalist figure, who in 1971 had symbolized a struggle costing more lives and arousing greater hopes than any single event in contemporary South Asian history, was gone. Nearly a million people had died in the war and the war-induced starvation which brought Bangladesh into being as an independent state. No one could ever count the exact number. And now the South Asian deck was to undergo a major reshuffle with the violent fall of Mujib. For the prolific stable of 'knowledgeable' observers, analysts and specialists, the future significance of the sudden change in the eastern subcontinent was not an easy matter to calculate.

As with all such events when they happen, no one except the actual participants knew what had really gone on. Yet everyone seemed to have a theory. And very soon Indira Gandhi was talking about the sure hand of foreign involvement. As usual, she was graphically unspecific. But her avid supporters during those first nuptial days of the Emergency, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India (C.P.I.), were more explicit: the C.I.A., said the C.P.I. Mrs. Gandhi, speaking of the tragedy of Mujib's death, said that what had happened in Bangladesh was added proof of the necessity of declaring the Emergency in India. She once more, straining at analogy, compared herself to Salvador Allende, saying outside forces were out to destabilize India and bring down her government. Mujib's death proved it beyond a doubt, she said.

However, for those who were well aware of the less apparent aspects of American policy in India, all of Mrs. Gandhi's implied rage at the alleged secret hand of the United States in Bangladesh was an expression of pure demagogic theatre in the best of the Gandhi entourage's dynastic style. There was too rich a history, albeit much of it clandestine, for there to be any element of sincerity in the Prime Minister's suggestive remarks. Since the sixties she had personally approved the continued collaboration of the intelligence services of India and the United States. She had approved new projects and operations which further cemented the firm link between the services of the two nations that had existed since the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. Their joint surveillance of China from Nepal in common violation of Nepalese territory and neutrality; their combined cross-border operations into China and the decade of clandestine support given the Khampa Tibetan rebels; their illicit financial ties between several American multinationals and the business aspirations of Sanjay Gandhi's patronage network with all its attendant kickbacking; plus the active role officials in the U.S. Embassy's political section played in setting up financial ties between American firms and the Prime Minister's relatives – all added up to the opposite of the pristine purity of her public posture. The statements of Mrs. Gandhi's awkward bedfellows, the pro-Moscow communists, were to be expected. Endlessly repeating allegations of covert American involvement while providing absolutely no detail or evidence was familiar fare.

Other, more neutral, observers during that summer of 1975 could not have imagined a more absurd moment for the United States to have covertly involved itself in the overthrow of a regime such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's in Bangladesh. It was the summer the world was watching Senator Church's hearings unfold on the details of American involvement in the assassination of various foreign leaders. Thus, that August nearly the entire foreign press corps in New Delhi, including the present writers, instinctively rejected the notion of any American link with the fall of Mujib, as simply specious propaganda from Indira Gandhi and the Moscow-oriented Communist Parties of India and Bangladesh.

These conclusions made in the summer of 1975 must now be completely re-examined. According to new information obtained from interviews with senior U.S. officials present at the American Embassy in Dacca and from well-informed Bengali sources, it appears that not only did the United States have prior knowledge of the coup which killed Mujib, but that American Embassy personnel had held discussions with individuals involved in the plot to overthow Mujib more than six months prior to his death. These discussions were held with the purpose of determining the attitude of the U.S. government towards a political change in Bangladesh if a coup d'etat were actually to happen. On the basis of investigative work which has spanned two years and over two hundred interviews we are prepared to outline in detail the story behind the men who killed Mujib. It is an intricate and complex story. We wish to state from the outset that, although we have unearthed new and fundamentally important information, without the power of legislative subpoena, a full and exhaustive investigation of the affair is impossible.

The Official Story

To start with, it is essential to set out the version of events which emerged at the time of the coup. What was put over then became the first and most important myth surrounding the event. This was that six junior officers, led by Majors Rashid, Farooq and Dalim with the three hundred men under their command, acted unilaterally and on their own in overthrowing Mujib. This is the version nearly all the foreign press corps adopted. The motives for the coup were attributed to a combination of personal grudges held by certain of the officers against Mujib and his associates, together with a general feeling of frustration at the widespread corruption which had come to characterize Mujib's regime. Following Mujib's murder most foreign reporters were barred from Bangladesh. However, a group of journalists did manage briefly to gain entry into Dacca from Bangkok late in the day of August 20th, five days after the coup, but were expelled within forty-eight hours on the 22nd. During the entire time they were confined to the Intercontinental Hotel and most of the details of the coup provided to the foreign press came principally from one source – a local Bengali journalist.[1]

But what became crucial in all the reporting of the coup is that none of the foreign or Bengali press probed beyond the most superficial aspects of what had happened. In Bangladesh, the new regime which took power, of course, would have obstructed any of the press from investigating. But the foreign press, in general, also let it drop. What prior contacts the Majors had before August (1975), which politicians had been contacted, what contacts they themselves had made, were all ignored. The version of events that the Majors had acted alone and unilaterally with only prior military and *without* prior political planning was the myth that came to stand as fact. A myth, as will be explained, which most of the young officers and soldiers under their command by and large themselves believed in.[2]

The morning Mujib and his family were killed, the political figure installed by the young Majors as President was Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed, a cabinet colleague of Mujib who held the portfolio of Commerce Minister. Mustaque was generally considered to be the representative of the rightist faction within Mujib's ruling Awami League. That morning, 15 August 1975, as Mustaque arrived at the Dacca studios of Bangladesh Radio to make his first broadcast to a tense capital city, he was accompanied by two, crucially important aides, Mahbub Alam Chashi and Taheruddin Thakur. Chashi is the man whose behind-the-scenes activities allegedly played the most critical organizing role in the entire affair. At the time of the August putsch Chashi was Vice-Chairman of the Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development at the district capital of Comilla.[3] He is a figure widely known for his populist right-wing views on agrarian change. On the morning of August 15th there arrived at Mustaque's side, along with Alam Chashi, Taheruddin Thakur, a former journalist and Mujib's State Minister for Information. Chashi and Thakur, intimate personal friends, are alleged to have been the organizational keys which unlocked and prepared well in advance the political terrain for the August military putsch. The history of Mustaque, Chashi and Takur, as far back as 1971, is an important element in the story.

Following the coup against Mujib, the new President, Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed, remained inpeccably reticent about any part he personally may have played in Mujib's downfall. He neither confirmed nor denied his prior involvement. He simply avoided any public discussion of the question, and in the meantime desperately attempted to stabilize his regime. Even after his own removal from power in November 1975, only three months after Mujib's demise, Mustaque continued to maintain his reticence about the August events. The following year, in June 1976, five months prior to his own arrest and imprisonment, Mustaque granted a three hour interview at his home in old Dacca to Lawrence Lifschultz, South Asia correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. He denied any prior knowledge of the coup plan or prior meetings with the army majors who carried out the action. Mustaque claimed during the interview that he had been as surprised as everyone else on the morning of August 15th, and had acceded to the Majors' request to assume the Presidency only to avoid further bloodshed in the country. 'When they came to my house that morning,' Mustaque told Lifschultz, 'I thought they had also come to kill me. I was completely surprised when they asked me to become President.'

The Majors, however, tell a very different story, one which is at wide variance with Mustaque's version. In a series of interviews conducted from exile in London for British television in August 1976 by *The Sunday Times* journalist Anthony Mascarenhas, the Majors claimed they were in direct contact with Mustaque in the weeks prior to the coup. Major Rashid told Mascarenhas, 'I had the first contact with him [Mustaque] around the first week of August and subsequently met him on the 13th and 14th.'[4] Sources in Bangladesh claim that, while this was the first direct meeting between the Majors and Mustaque, prior contacts had existed with representatives of Mustaque several months prior to the actual coup. Unsatisfied with access to intermediaries, the Majors insisted on a direct meeting before any action would actually be carried out. The Majors had themselves put the first aspects of their military plan into operation as early as March 1975, by initiating twice monthly night manoeuvres which were to be held jointly by the Bengal Lancers Tank Unit and the Second Field Artillery Regiment.

The Majors who actually killed Mujib viewed themselves as the centre piece of the entire dramatic event. To their understanding they were the principal actors in the affair which had changed the course of Bangladesh's political history. But in the view of others they were politically naive individuals who usefully offered up their armed talents to be used as pawns by more sophisticated political forces. Both Farooq and Rashid did admit to Mascarenhas their deeply felt need for political backing, which even their own political naivete recognized as essential if they were to survive the period after the coup. Thus these cocky stars, before they would move out of the barracks, needed a nod from Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed. While in their own minds they remained convinced that it was *they* who had taken on Mustaque Ahmed, more accurately it was Mustaque and his political nexus who had taken them on board.

The more interesting issue is what Mustaque required before he would give his own unqualified 'nod' of support. Knowledgeable Bengali sources claim that Mustaque and his two principal operatives at the time, Mahbub Alam Chashi and Taheruddin Thakur, had been involved for more than a year in a sequence of events and plans designed to bring about the overthrow of Mujib. Following the famine of 1974 Mujib's regime had been faltering and becoming increasingly unpopular. The main object of the Mustaque Conspiracy at this stage was to recruit a military faction within the Army which would stage a coup and back Mustaque's leadership in the subsequent period. Our sources allege that Chashi and Thakur were the principal go-betweens for these contacts.

The Mustaque group reportedly felt that the most important figure to be won over was Major-General Ziaur Rahman (Zia), the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, whose seniority had been passed over following independence, when Mujib had appointed another more junior officer, Major General Shafiullah, as the Chief of Army Staff. Within Army circles it was known that Zia was disturbed at this and at the general humiliation the Army had received after it had been called in to crack down on illegal border smuggling in the Spring of '74. The Army had arrested important district level officials of Mujib's party, the Awami League, in connection with the illicit cross-border trade with India. But after their arrests the Awami Leaguers were freed on Mujib's orders and the Army was called off the anti-smuggling operation. It was an insult many Army officers would remember.

Bengali military sources claim that Major-General Zia was secretly approached by representatives of the Mustaque group, reported to include Chashi, and asked for his support. Zia reportedly agreed that there was need for a change, but refused to commit himself to any action at that stage. Mustaque's circle carefully continued to search for the necessary military contacts which could carry through the action. Contact was made with Majors Rashid and Farooq. The Majors on 20th March 1975 approached Major-General Zia with their proposal for military action to effect a 'political change'. According to Rashid's interview with Mascarenhas he told Zia, 'We the junior officers have already worked it out, we want your support and your leadership.' Zia's reaction was still to remain aloof in these early stages and to hedge. But most significantly he indicated he would not throw the weight of his command against such a move. Again, according to Rashid, the response from Zia was the statement, 'I am a senior officer. I cannot be involved in such things. If you junior officers want to do it, go ahead.'[5] With full knowledge that a coup was in the offing, Zia remained silent and waited for his own moment.

The American Connection?

Crucial events were moving within other realms. According to a highly placed U.S. Embassy diplomat, who has insisted upon strict confidentiality, officials at the American Embassy were approached in late 1974 by persons intending to overthrow the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. According to this

Embassy source a series of meetings took place with Embassy personnel between November 1974 and January 1975. This was the same period in which the Church and Pike Committee hearings in Washington on C.I.A. assassinations of foreign leaders were gearing up. The Committee hearings were having their own impact within the American diplomatic and intelligence bureaucracies, creating great nervousness and anxiety. The American press was openly speculating that senior American intelligence officials might face imprisonment for illegal clandestine action carried out in Chile and elsewhere.

In the atmosphere emanating from the Senate hearings, a decision was made in January 1975. According to a senior Embassy official, 'We came to an understanding in the Embassy that we would stay out of it and disengage from those people.' Although a decision was made at a high level in the Embassy that there would be no further contact with the group which had approached the Americans to ascertain what the U.S. attitude would be should a change of regime be effected, what happened subsequently is a matter of controversy among U.S. officials interviewed. Those who knew of the earlier meetings deny any personal knowledge of what happened after early 1975. A senior U.S. diplomat claimed: 'In January 1975 we came to an understanding in the Embassy that we would stay out of it. I can't say whether there was any approach to the Embassy by any of these people in the period from January to August. In the period before that they did try to approach us.' Others allege that, while contact was broken off at the level of diplomatic and Foreign Service officials who wished to remain 'clean', liaison was taken over and carried on through the channel of the American Embassy's C.I.A. Station Chief, Philip Cherry, and other station agents.

When interviewed, Cherry categorically denied this allegation. 'We had no Bangladeshi come into the office and tell us anything about any plans for coups or anything like that,' he said. 'We had all kinds of Bangladeshis coming into the office, but not for that reason. If anyone like that had come in, I have heard from my colleagues who were there before, they would have been listened to but told to go away.' Cherry did, however, add an important qualification. 'There is one thing,' he said, 'there are politicians who frequently approach embassies, and perhaps have contacts there. They think they may have contacts. But that's a far cry from any of those embassies involved in assisting them in involvement in a coup. A political officer's job is to assist his government by providing information on what is going on and a good political officer has many contacts. But that does not mean he is advising these politicans or coup leaders to overthrow governments.'[6] Cherry insisted throughout the interview that he had been completely under the supervision of the Ambassador. Others present at the Embassy disagree.

A senior U.S. diplomat, formerly a high ranking official at the American Embassy in Bangladesh, said when asked if Cherry or C.I.A. staff had continued contact with those planning to overthrow Mujib without the knowledge of the Ambassador, 'Let me answer this question theoretically, outside the context of Bangladesh. No, this kind of thing is not done by the Station Chief. But as one American to another, it has been done. There have been lapses.' Another high level diplomat at the U.S. Embassy during the same period stated, 'We should always be informed by the Station Chief about his activities or contacts. But, I cannot guarantee that Cherry was not making contacts that were not approved by the Ambassador.' The U.S. envoy to Bangladesh at the time was Eugene Boster, later the American Ambassador to Guatemala. As will be discussed in detail, Congressional investigators studying U.S.-backed coup initiatives in Chile in 1970 and 1973 unearthed explicit directives from Nixon and Kissinger to the Central Intelligence Agency that the U.S. Ambassador, Edward Korry, and other Foreign Service Officials in the Embassy should be kept in the dark about covert operations then being put into motion in that country.

Besides the Chile experience, there have been instances in many countries where clandestine C.I.A. operations have been carried forward, quite independent of the knowledge of ambassadors of reluctant political staffs, who might have qualms or be unreliable from a security and secrecy point of view. In these instances, the U.S. Diplomatic Corps serves as an articulate fig leaf for actual operations. This particular dimension of U.S. foreign policy was borne out in a detailed report published in *The New York Times* on February 3, 1978. The report focused on the independence C.I.A. Station Chiefs maintain from their resident Ambassadors, when it concerns the conduct of covert operations. This dualism has been the centre of intense antagonism between the State Department and the intelligence community. A number of officials interviewed referred to the issue. *The Times* reported:

> An order by President Carter giving United States Ambassadors around the world authority to supervise 'all United States government officers and employees in their countries' has produced widely divergent interpretations by the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department. The State Department issued a guideline simply amplifying Mr Carter's directive, according to high-ranking Administration officials. But the intelligence agency guidelines note 'special exceptions' to what an ambassador might oversee, according to one official. These exceptions included prohibitions on communicating details of covert operations and of administrative procedures undertaken by C.I.A. Station Chiefs in foreign posts . . . . The Carter letter dated Oct. 25, stated that the United States Ambassadors 'have the authority to review message traffic to and from all personnel under your jurisdiction' –all presumably including C.I.A. officers. Several days later, both Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and Admiral Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, sent out guidelines interpreting the Presidential letter, as Mr. Carter indicated they would. But the two sets of guidelines differed and, according to high-ranking Administration officials, the C.I.A. directive tightened restrictions on what agency messages an ambassador might see . . . . A White House spokesman said that President Carter would have no comment on the divergent interpretations. A State Department official, interpreting the Turner guidelines said, 'In effect they stated the President's letter and the State Department guidelines do not apply to the C.I.A.' The official said that ambassadors had been freer to oversee covert operations under the guidelines that applied before the

> Carter letter went out. (State Department & C.I.A. Split On Envoy Role: Interpret Embassies' Control Over Covert Operations Differently, by David Binder, *New York Times*, 2 March 1978.)

The issue was raised again three months later, when the House of Representatives' Intelligence Oversight Committee opened hearings in Washington on the issue. Stansfield Turner, Director of the C.I.A., told the Committee that American Ambassadors were better informed than before, but would still be denied access to certain information. Turner said the C.I.A. in most cases would withhold the identity of its sources and the names of its agents from U.S. envoys, especially if they are foreign officials with whom an ambassador deals on a regular basis. All details of sensitive covert operations may also not be given to Ambassadors. *The Washington Post* reported on 22 April 1978:

> It's not because we don't trust the ambassadors, the C.I.A. Director declared, but under what he wryly called 'Turner's Law', he said that the danger of leaks increases in 'geometric proportion' to the number of people who know of a particular secret. Especially hazardous, Mr. Turner said, was the prospect of an ambassador making some giveaway slip of recognition on greeting a Foreign Minister in a receiving line when the Ambassador knows the Minister to be a C.I.A. asset.

The real issue is more serious than quips about 'Turner's Law' or indiscreet diplomatic slips indicate. At issue is the continuing fact that a good deal of American policy overseas is still ultimately linked to covert operations. Intrinsic to this set-up is a process in which the left hand cannot be allowed to know fully what the right is doing. The crucial question in the Bangladesh case is what liaison contacts Philip Cherry, the C.I.A.'s Station Chief in Dacca, his staff and attendant networks or other American channels independent of the C.I.A., did or did not maintain with persons linked to one of the several plans being formulated to overthrow the Mujib government. Cherry in a recent interview has denied having prior knowledge of the coup that killed Mujib on August 15, 1975. However, some months after the event, in December 1975 over drinks at his house in Dacca, Cherry told an American journalist in a discussion of press coverage of the coup that no reporter had got the full story. When asked if he had known what was about to happen, Cherry indicated to the correspondent that they had not known the exact moment, but they had known something was going to happen.

Philip Cherry, the C.I.A.'s Bangladesh Station Chief, took up his post in the Bengali capital a year prior to Mujib's overthrow. In fact, the coup happened on the evening of Cherry's forty-fourth birthday. He had joined the Agency in 1959 after studying law at the University of Pennsylvania, and at the International Academy of Law in the Hague. His early postings with the C.I.A. were principally in Africa, serving at Salisbury in 1962 and Nairobi in 1964. However, his first field experience in Asia occurred soon after Pakistan's brutal crackdown in March 1971 had driven the Bengalis into open rebellion. As the Bangladesh crisis developed, Agency stations in New Delhi and Calcutta were expanded and Cherry arrived in the Indian capital in June 1971. It would be his first direct operational involvement with Bangladesh affairs. Three years later, in August of 1974, he would move to Dacca to take over direction of the Station.

Unlike his predecessor, George Walsh, Cherry got off to an unhappy start in Dacca with the rest of the resident American community. Walsh, who came out to Dacca after the Liberation War to get the operation going in the post-independence period, cultivated the low profile style that goes with the work of the business. In general, he made very little impression among Americans in Dacca, although he is tenderly remembered by some for his delicate recitation of *Casey At The Bat* during the American annual amateur night. In contrast, Cherry got himself mixed up in one of those small-minded emotional affairs that isolated expatriate communities are well known for in less cosmopolitan postings. After he arrived in Dacca he embarked on a rather narrow crusade which produced a surprising number of enemies among the American expatriates in Dacca. Having become a leading member of the American Club, a sports and social facility in the posh Gulshan suburb of Dacca known as The Golden Ghetto, Cherry led a battle to exclude 'non-official' or non-Embassy Americans from membership in the Club. His efforts were successful. Following a series of angry meetings, which earned Cherry the enmity of many non-Embassy U.S. citizens, the Club closed its doors to all Americans except those holding diplomatic rank. He had won the Battle of the House Rules. But, besides fighting out such significant issues as who should have access to American swimming pools and tennis courts, Cherry's name kept cropping up in those quiet discussions among Americans in Dacca in the post-coup period. Was the U.S. in any way mixed up in it, or was it all simply the exaggerated rumours of plot-conscious Bengalis?

Other leading C.I.A. officials concerned with the subcontinent, such as Alan Wolfe, a senior C.I.A. South Asian analyst and a former Pakistan Station Chief, have refused requests for interviews. Wolfe declined, saying any interview would be 'a no win situation'. A direct request to Stansfield Turner for official authorized interviews with William Grimsley, a former C.I.A. Station Chief in New Delhi, Alan Wolfe, Philip Cherry, Angus Theurmer, John Foster and other knowledgeable Agency officials, has not been granted. Requests made nearly a year ago under the Freedom of Information Act for C.I.A. cable traffic and memorandums concerning the August 1975 coup have not yet been acted on. Similar requests under the Act for State Department cable traffic relating to the August and November 1975 coups in Bangladesh resulted in 74 cables being identified as being 'relevant'. However, State Department sources have informed us that there actually exist hundreds of cables relating to the period, including detailed reports and memorandums. Of the 74 officially identified, 36 were declassified. Out of 36 'relevant' cables, 18 were substantially censored, blacking out material which the State Department considers still classified in the interest of national security. Thirty-eight cables were withheld altogether. Of the material which was declassified and uncensored there remained almost no information which was not already well known or obvious.

On the Periphery: the U.S. Strategy of Directed Transitions

What first presents itself is the difficult and complex question: what possible interest would the United States have had in involving itself in a coup in Bangladesh? State Department officials are always at formal pains to emphasize that American interests in Bangladesh are not 'strategic', but purely 'humanitarian'. Whether American aid is an act of generosity to the Bengali poor or a strategic subsidy to the ruling class of Bangladesh is an issue discussed at length elsewhere and must be left aside here.[7] However, the critical question in 1975 was hardly a question of humanitarian assistance. The strategic issue of whether or not to get involved in a coup d'etat was one of influencing an imminent transition. In 1975 Mujib's regime was in deep crisis and facing growing popular opposition. Following the famine of 1974 there was open talk throughout the country of *how long* Mujib would last, not *if* he would last. Throughout 1974 leftist parties were organizing mass anti-government rallies and in certain parts of the country open insurgency had begun to develop. In certain respects the situation might be compared to Indonesia in 1965, when Sukarno's declining health and political fortunes made it obvious to any astute analyst that the once popular nationalist leader would shortly be eclipsed by new forces of either the left or the right. The question for the Americans in both instances, as in many others, was whether they would influence the *direction* of the imminent transition.

Such a change of national Bangladeshi leadership would be occurring in an area which historically has been a violent political tinder-box. The underlying context of the entire north-eastern region of South Asia is one of knife-edged political instability, rooted in a society that is one of the most impoverished areas of the world. It is a region which has long been sinking into greater poverty and underdevelopment. Across the border from Bangladesh in India's state of West Bengal, a Communist-led United Front has been elected into provincial power three times since 1967, each time with a larger majority, on the basis of an elusive mass hope of achieving at least half-way measures in a transition to 'socialism in one province'. It is a form of local politics that stands out against the overriding power of the centralized authority of the Indian state. In 1969 a student and peasant rebellion in West Bengal broke its moorings from the anchor of parliamentary Communism and turned into a widespread rural and urban Marxist insurgency known as the Naxalite Movement. The Naxalite agitation exploded into open fighting in parts of Calcutta and in the provinces of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Andrah Pradesh. It proved to be a powerful and difficult force for the New Delhi authorities who ultimately suppressed it with predictable brutality.

Bangladesh is located at the vortex of this strategic and highly politicized north-eastern region of South Asia.On its borders are Nagaland and Mizoram where India has been contending for nearly two decades with an insurgency on the part of these two national minorities. From Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal to Bangladesh itself, there stretched a population of nearly 200 million people, more than 40% of whom are landless peasants living in abject conditions of semi-starvation. In Bangladesh since the early sixties the proportion of the population which consumes less than the nutritional minimum intake of calories has risen dramatically. According to a recent International Labour Organization study the proportion of the population which lives below what the I.L.O. terms the 'absolute poverty' level, defined as 1,935 calories a day, rose from 40.2% in 1963-64 to 78.5% of the population in 1973-74. The figure is astonishing when juxtaposed to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization's minimal requirement of 2,150 calories a day. In South Asia it is estimated that a field hand burns up 3,880 calories a day duing peak seasons of heavy work and 2,780 during periods of light work. Defining a more appalling category known as the 'extreme poverty' level at 1,720 calories, or less than 80% of the recommended daily nutritional intake, the I.L.O. states that in the same decade (1963-73) the proportion of Bangladesh's population below this level had risen from 5.2% to 42.1%; or, put another way, four out of every ten people were in a state of 'extreme starvation', while seven out of every ten were at least facing 'absolute malnutrition'.[8] The trend is a clear one. A pauperized landless peasantry, nearer to starvation each year, is the leading issue for the entire region, and these people along with small landholders have little to gain from the present social order. These economic and social trends are what underlie the radical political upheavals of the region – both those of the past and of the future.

Within this context, the United States, when it has publicly articulated any specific foreign policy objective toward the ostensibly peripheral position of Bangladesh within America's global strategy, has focused on the importance which internal stability of the country implies for the entire region. This was stated most explicitly in the State Department's 1978 review presentation to Congress on U.S. Security Assistance Programs. The exclusive emphasis in the section entitled *Justification of the Program* concerned Bangladesh's postion in the link of an overall concern for internal and regional stability. U.S. military assistance to Bangladesh, although still modest in scale, began only *after* the coup d'etat which killed Mujib. To most observers the two phenomena are not unconnected. The State Department's 1978 report states:

> The present Government of Bangladesh is dominated by pragmatic military leaders who follow a non-aligned foreign policy. It is U.S. policy to support this non-alignment and to assist Bangladesh in its economic development. These objectives are tied to our interest in promoting overall regional stability. The Government of Bangladesh must find solutions to the myriad problems which confront that impoverished nation. One problem is the maintenance of internal stability in a society whose fabric has been weakened by a decade or more of turmoil . . . . The Bangladesh Government

> has asked us to provide a limited amount of military training. By proceeding with this training, we will help to improve an institution which contributes to stability in Bangladesh and in the region.[9]

'Stability' is mentioned here three times in one paragraph as the object of American policy in the country and the region. While the State Department report notes that Bangladesh is now ruled by 'pragmatic military leaders who follow a non-aligned foreign policy' and that it is 'U.S. policy to support this non-alignment', the report in a separate section curiously warns that 'Bangladesh poses no threat to any neighbouring state, but it could affect regional stability by a change in its international political alignment.' In one and the same breath the State Department appears to be advancing opposite arguments: the U.S. supports Bangladesh's 'non-alignment', but is anxious lest 'a change in its international political alignment' affect regionsl stability.

Cutting through this foreign policy jargon, what has actually happened has been a clear shift in Bangladesh's international alignment since the coup against Mujib. The Mujib government's orientation internationally was politically identified with India under Indira Gandhi's premiership and with the Soviet Union. This alignment dated from the contingencies of the 1971 war and Kissinger's tilt towards Pakistan. Today the new military regime's orientation in Dacca is clearly towards the United States, the Islamic bloc as represented by America's ally Saudi Arabia, and towards China to a degree similar to that of Ayub Khan's regime in Pakistan during the 1960s, when Pakistan's relations with Peking were utilized as a counterforce to New Delhi.

In a strategic sense, the Western powers rarely have an overt and overriding interest in particular areas while certain conditions exist. It matters very little to the global balance of contending forces if a poor, backward, non-communist nation starves. One might argue Afghanistan had even less significance to the strategic concepts of Western tacticians than Bangladesh had, until the uprising in 1978 which brought the People's Democratic Party to power in Kabul. Then 'unimportant' Afghanistan became headline news and was daily discussed as a serious threat to European and American interests in the northern tier of the Persian Gulf region.[10] If a socialist regime were to come to power in Dacca, the old unimportance of Bangladesh would undoubtedly suddenly dissolve into one of overriding and urgent significance.

Following the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971, ships of the Soviet Navy moved into Chittagong Harbour in Southeastern Bangladesh to conduct mine-clearing operations and remove sunken vessels. The Soviets remained for over two years during a period in which the strategic position of the Indian Ocean was a hot issue for Pentagon planners pressing for a new Guam-style American base at Diego Garcia. Soviet ships at Chittagong were alleged to have been involved in more than simple salvage operations, with one Bangladesh naval officer commenting during an interview in 1974 that it was 'the longest salvage operation for a small harbour' he had ever known of. The Soviets, of course, denied their presence was connected to any military or intelligence purposes. But the West was certainly less than pleased with the

Soviet presence in Chittagong and the Mujib government's authorization of it. Today, under the pro-Western martial law regime of General Zia, such a Soviet presence would be unthinkable.

Bangladesh's about-turn between the superpowers is only part of the story of the coup against Mujib in 1975. The whole story can only be understood in the context of the conditions created by the 1971 War for Independence. The links made in 1971, and even earlier, by the men who planned his overthrow in 1975, are integral to any complete understanding of Mujib's final fall from power.

War Breaks Out As Kissinger Reaches For Peking

In December 1970, two years after the turmoil which ended Field Marshal Ayub Khan's decade of military dictatorship, Pakistan held what was widely considered its first genuinely democratic election since its establishment as a state in 1947. In the 1970 election the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman swept the polls in East Pakistan with a vote sufficient to command a majority in the National Assembly and to make Mujib the Prime Minister of all Pakistan. In West Pakistan the election turned in majorities for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party in the Punjab and Sindh Provinces, while the National Awami Party of Wali Khan and Khair Bux Marri gained majorities in the Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Under the agreed electoral procedure the National Assembly would have convened and Mujib would have assumed the position of Prime Minister of all of Pakistan.

This, however, would have meant a dramatic shift in the twenty years of political and economic domination West Pakistan had exercised over the East. Intense political pressure built up in West Pakistan following the December election and prior to the scheduled convening of the National Assembly in March. The object was to find a way of preserving West Pakistan's pre-eminence by extracting prior concessions from Mujib on his declared programme of greater inter-regional equality. The Awami League, having won a democratic election, would concede nothing and called for the convening of the National Assembly as scheduled. The crisis which broke Pakistan apart came to a critical head on 3 March 1971, when the Martial Law authorities postponed indefinitely the convening of the Assembly. Massive civil disobedience and demonstrations began in East Pakistan. The entire province encompassing all classes went on strike. After two weeks, on March 25th, the Pakistan Army cracked down in Dacca in the worst moment of violence and general butchery South Asia had ever witnessed during a single night. Pakistan's civil war had begun and the inexorable basis for Bangladesh's independence laid.

We are not concerned with the general history of the civil war, but only with the specific international alignments which developed in 1971 as they relate to the 1975 coup. Relationships which developed in this earlier period emerge with new importance in 1975. However, it should not be forgotten that from the late fifties Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League had been considered pro-Western and pro-American. In 1954 Pakistan was integrated into the archipelago of American military alliances, the league of CENTO and SEATO, while India remained aloof. A year later the Bandung Conference, inspired by Chou En-Lai and Nehru, made non-alignment a touchstone of Third World politics. In the period 1954-58, just prior to Ayub Khan's coup d'état, opposition developed within Pakistan over the issue of international alignment with the United States. Mujib's party, the Awami League, split over the issue. The pro-Western faction led by H.S. Suhrawardy and Mujib declared itself in favour of the alliance. A dissenting faction led by Maulana Bhashani declared its opposition and broke off from the Awami League to found what eventually became the (pro-Peking) National Awami Party.[11] Furthermore, Mujib had often expressed his preference for a Westminster-style democratic state. What friends he had in the Western democracies were in general linked to the liberal wings of the Democratic Party in the United States and the Labour Party in England.

However, 1971 in South Asia was a different matter. Kissinger and Nixon were not in the least inclined towards sympathy for the victims of the Pakistan Army's crackdown in East Bengal – even if these very victims had won the national elections. Global realignments were in motion and the Bengal 'problem' appeared as a threatening and annoying sidelight. At the time of the appalling crackdown in Dacca, Pakistan's military head of state, General Yahya Khan, and Pakistan's Ambassador in Peking, K.M. Kaiser, were crucial intermediaries in the first delicate steps of Nixon's reach for the Forbidden City and Tien An Mien. Kissinger was adamant that these negotiations should not be disturbed at any cost. All other questions were subordinate for the U.S. leadership – and few outside Nixon and Kissinger's inner circle knew anything of the China initiative. At this stage only four people in the entire United States knew anything of Kissinger's contacts with Peking. Furthermore, underlying Nixon's Republican politics and Kissinger's realpolitik, there was a demonstrable and clear preference for military dictatorships in the Third World. Anti-militarist democratic movements such as Mujib's Awami League in East Bengal were potential hotbeds of yet more radical trends which the United States would never encourage.

So it came about that the Bangladesh movement for independence gathered almost no official support from the United States, despite the unprecedented rebellion within the State Department ranks against Kissinger's standpoint. Following the Pakistani Army's crackdown in Dacca, the Awami League leadership ran for refuge in neighbouring India. Indian support, for strategic reasons, was crucial to the Bengalis as an initial base for military operations and refuge. India's own willingness to back a movement led by the Awami League was obvious in many respects. Both the Awami League and the Indian Congress Party stood for an ostensibly similar ideology: a secular parliamentary state. Moreover, in India's strategic view, the break-up of Pakistan would remove New Delhi's chief national rival in South Asia – as long as the war did not become prolonged, and more radical Marxist elements did not achieve dominance in a protracted struggle.

Thus, the Indian Army intervened in the Bangladesh conflict in December 1971, imposing an immediate resolution to the nine months of guerrilla struggle. Prior to the actual intervention and in the face of American hostility, India approached the Soviet Union for superpower backing. The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty was signed in August 1971 and the Russians in large part financed India's military expedition. The Awami League's own military and financial dependence on the so-called Indo-Soviet Axis later opened Mujib to attack from more radical Bangladesh nationalists who never wanted India's armed intervention on their behalf. These attacks occurred during 1973-75 when deteriorating economic conditions made many take the view that Bangladesh had traded Pakistani dominance for Indian hegemony.

In 1973, two years after the war, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington-based research foundation affiliated with the quarterly *Foreign Policy*, undertook a major study of U.S. policy during the Bangladesh crisis of 1971. The investigation lasted nine months and was under the direction of Roger Morris, a former member of Kissinger's staff at the National Security Council. Morris had come to the Carnegie Endowment following his resignation from the Nixon Administration. He had separated himself from Kissinger's entourage the day before the American invasion of Cambodia.

Under Morris' supervision the Carnegie study interviewed in detail more than 150 officials of the U.S. State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Department, Agency for International Development, Office of Public Safety, National Security Council and other agencies which had any connection, even the most tangential, with the Bangladesh crisis. The Carnegie Endowment never issued a final report. Due to internal dissension at Carnegie the study was never completed. Without the knowledge of Morris or others connected with this study, these interviews and other raw research information have been made available to the present writers. The information they contain, when taken as a whole, is profound and comprehensive.

In an appendix to this Part of the book we discuss in detail information based on the Carnegie Papers which offer rich new insights into the American tilt towards Pakistan in 1971. In particular, we examine the significance of the then secret Kissinger negotiations aimed at America's dramatic *volte face* with China and also analyse the effect America's exclusive obeisance to the Pakistan channel with Peking had on U.S. policy toward Bangladesh. In addition, Richard Nixon's long-standing personal dislike for Indira Gandhi and his old association with Pakistan's military leadership is brought out from interviews with senior U.S. officials. [See Appendix A.]

Calcutta Days 1971: Secret Negotiations and the Mustaque Circle

The details of the 1971 period bear special importance when viewed from the perspective of the violent developments in 1975 – particularly the coup d'état which killed Mujib. The Carnegie interviews with senior U.S. officials conclusively confirm previous reports of the existence of eight secret contacts which took place in Calcutta and elsewhere between U.S. representatives and Bengali officials in 1971. In June of that year the United States began making a tentative attempt to act as a channel between elements of the Bengali leadership which Pakistan did not consider guilty of high treason, and General Yahya Khan, head of Pakistan's military junta. The exact officials and issues involved in these negotiations in Calcutta remain classified information from the American side. But sources with detailed knowledge of the Calcutta events claim all eight contacts were made exclusively with Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed's political coterie. These sources include former members of Mustaque's staff and senior officials in Bangladesh's then Provisional Government. While most of the secret contacts reportedly occurred in Calcutta, other locations are also said to have been used. A senior American official of the State Department's Intelligence and Research (I.N.R.) Division told the Carnegie researchers, 'He [Kissinger] had been talking to the representatives directly.'[12]

Mustaque was at the time Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government of Bangladesh. Thus, from the American point of view, it might have seemed most natural for the United States to be dealing directly with Mustaque. However, the matter was not that simple. Within the Bangladesh Provisional Government there existed a number of factions and developing trends. The Prime Minister was Tajuddin Ahmed. From Kissinger's point of view he was a man to be circumvented. If it meant anything in the context of the period, Tajuddin was considered pro-Soviet and pro-Indian, in the sense that he recognized the strategic necessity of such an alliance against Pakistan, given American backing of Yahya Khan. But, most significantly, Tajuddin favoured the unrelenting pursuit of Bangladesh's War of Independence. The refusal of the Pakistan authorities in March 1971 to accept the results of the elections which would have made Mujib the Prime Minister of all Pakistan, combined with the brutal magnitude of the repression, made the Provisional Government's standpoint clear and unconditional: there would be no going back and no negotiated solution short of full independence for Bangladesh.

Tajuddin and virtually the entire Bengali leadership were adamant regarding complete independence. The stage had been reached where it was out of the question for them or for those fighting at the front that a compromise only granting autonomous status to East Bengal within the Pakistan union could be negotiated. This was what Kissinger now belatedly favoured at a point when it was completely unacceptable to a majority of the leadership of the Bangladesh movement. It was too little, coming far too late. With victory in sight, and with world opinion clearly on their side, such a proposition would have been politically absurd to adopt.

The solitary exception to this among the exiled Bengali leadership was Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed. While Tajuddin was identified by reputation with the Indo-Soviet strategic alignment, Mustaque had long been identified as the leading personality of the American lobby within the Awami League leadership. In terms of the Awami League spectrum, Tajuddin was considered a left-wing social democrat in the context of underdevelopment in the Third World. He favoured widespread industrial nationalization in an independent Bangladesh, including foreign capital. Within the confines of internal Awami League politics, Mustaque was Tajuddin's theoretical opposite. Mustaque openly favoured *laissez-faire* capitalism, highly favourable terms for foreign investment, and he opposed nationalization. Tajuddin was known to have been close to a number of members of the banned Pakistan Communist Party in the fifties and sixties. In the early fifties Tajuddin and Mohammed Toaha, later the leader of the Maoist East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), had shared the same house in Dacca. Mustaque, on the other hand, was a deeply religious Muslim and a devout Anti-Communist.

The United States, according to Bengali sources, did not open its negotiations with Tajuddin, who was the Prime Minister, but opened secret contacts with Khondakar Mustaque. Tajuddin and the rest of the leadership were kept carefully in the dark. During this period of the negotiations, Mustaque's two most important proteges were his Foreign Secretary, Mahbub Alam Chashi, and a special assistant, Taheruddin Thakur: the 'Mustaque Triangle', as this little group was known among Calcutta's 'Bangladesh Watchers'. Officials of Bangladesh's Provisional Government with intimate knowledge of this period say that Chashi and Thakur played principal roles in the confidential contacts with the United States in 1971. Four years later this same trio – Mustaque, Chashi and Thakur – would arrive together at Bangladesh Radio to announce that Mujib was dead and that Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed had taken over the Presidency of Bangladesh by coup d'état.

According to these former officials, the agreement between Mustaque and the Americans during the 1971 negotiations constituted the terms for a return to the *status quo ante*. Moreover, these sources report that Mustaque and his Foreign Secretary, Mahbub Alam Chashi, had provisionally agreed to conditions for a separate peace: one which would maintain the unity of Pakistan, if the Pakistan Army would cease military operations, withdraw to barracks and allow new negotiations to begin, ending open warfare. To the Nixon Administration, this seemed a desirable and reasonable solution. For most Bengalis, now irrevocably committed to full independence after what they regarded as Pakistani genocide in East Bengal, this form of compromise was virtual treason to the country's liberation movement. In short, a sell-out. One Bengali compared it to George Washington and the American Continental Congress, on the verge of military victory, suddenly accepting a return to colonial status on the basis of a last minute repeal of the Stamp Act.

In the autumn of 1971 other ministers in the Provisional Government reportedly discovered the secret contacts Mustaque had been having with the United States. Tajuddin, the Prime Minister, is said to have been enraged when he unearthed what had been going on behind the backs of the rest of the Provisional Government. The Indians, who for their own distinct strategic reasons were also fully committed to Bengali independence from Pakistan, were similarly furious. There were demands that Mustaque be sacked as Foreign Minister. He was temporarily allowed to maintain his post for an outward semblance of unity, but exercised little power in the last months of the war. He was denied the right to travel to New York to represent Bangladesh at the U.N. General Assembly. And following independence, Mustaque was removed from the post of Foreign Minister and given the minor portfolio of Commerce. Mustaque's dismissal as Foreign Minister was the first major administrative change that Tajuddin made immediately after the Pakistani defeat. It was the only major decision carried out prior to Mujib's release from prison in Pakistan in early January 1972. Carnegie's researchers were told by a senior American official of the Intelligence and Research Division, 'We believed that there was a possibility of negotiating with the Awami League leaders in Calcutta. Unfortunately, later – in October – we learned that we couldn't represent all the factions. And they learned they couldn't . . . . I can't go into specifics.'[13]

In June 1976, nearly a year after Mujib had been killed and eight months after Mustaque had himself been thrown out of the Presidency by another military upheaval, Lawrence Lifschultz interviewed Mustaque. During the interview Mustaque confirmed the contacts that had taken place in Calcutta in 1971, but refused to specify what had been agreed with the Americans at the time. 'If you want to know,' Mustaque told Lifschultz, 'you go ask Nixon. I am not going to tell you.' In November 1976, a year after the rebellion which toppled him, Mustaque was arrested by the Martial Law authorities in Dacca, charged and tried for corruption. He was fined 100,000 Taka for abuse of his official position, and is now serving a five year prison sentence for corruption, not for the murder of Mujib.

The animosity between Mustaque and Tajuddin never died. Tajuddin never forgot what he regarded as Mustaque's nearly successful covert betrayal of the independence struggle to the Americans and Pakistanis. Mustaque for his part never forgot the humiliation he underwent in his summary dismissal as Foreign Minister by Tajuddin and the pleasure of the Indian authorities at his removal. Four years later, after Mujib was already dead and while Mustaque was himself being toppled from power, a group of as yet publicly unidentified men entered Dacca Central Jail on the night of 4/5 November 1975. During Mustaque's last hours in power his old rival from Calcutta days – Tajuddin Ahmed – was bayoneted to death in his cell, along with three other cabinet ministers from Mujib's government. Mustaque had jailed all four when he had seized power the previous August. Mustaque, in his interview with Lifschultz, denied any involvement in the Dacca Central Jail murders. But sources in the prison's administration, who were at the jail that evening, allege the jail killings were ordered by Mustaque and his compatriots in the military and National Security Intelligence Service, so as to insure there would never be a Mujibist restoration by the Sheik's leading political lieutenants.

During the events of August 1975, it must be remembered, the impression the public had from the outset was that six junior officers, led by Majors Farooq and Rashid of the Bengal Lancers Armoured Corps and the Second Field Artillery, had acted unilaterally and on their own initiative without prior direction or political planning. This was the impression given both by the Majors themselves and the man brought in at 'a minute past midnight', Khondakar Mustaque. Although Mustaque had been a member of Mujib's new one-party formation (BAKSAL), the young officers claimed Mustaque would, nevertheless, rescue the country from Mujib's tyranny. The Majors gave every impression that the show was theirs, and theirs alone, from start to finish. The 300 men under their command shared the same conviction. They believed it was their finest hour. However, it would last little more than 60 days.

The flaw in this version of events is vital to the purpose it served. By identifying six majors and 300 sepoys of the Armoured and Artillery Corps as the sole actors, it obscured whatever prior political planning had gone into the coup, and gave an aura of innocence to Mustaque's new leadership. Mustaque could then say that what had happened was past, the need now was to bring stability. He could affect the pose of a national statesman, standing above the antagonisms and conflicts which had driven the Majors and Mujib into such a deadly confrontation. Indeed Mustaque was, in the words of his principal propagandist of the period, Enayethullah Khan, 'a man for all seasons'. Moreover, the placing of full responsibility for the coup on the Majors, and not Mustaque, fulfilled the specialist Bonapartist posturing and egoism which the former, now self-appointed Colonels, required. The most important object of the story, however, was to obscure the details of what had gone on in Mustaque's camp prior to August 15th.

The Eminence Grise

Mustaque's most important protege in this period prior to August 15th was Mahbub Alam Chashi. During the Calcutta days he had served as Mustaque's Foreign Secretary. Chashi in the late 1950s had been on the staff of the Pakistan Embassy in Washington and since then had been known within the Pakistan Foreign Service as one who kept up close relationships with his American academic and diplomatic counterparts. Among the myriad factions of the Pakistani bureaucracy, Chashi's ideological commitment to the American lobby was well known. Senior officials who served in Bangladesh's Provisional Government in Calcutta allege Chashi was the principal intermediary in the secret negotiations conducted with the United States.

Without question he is one of the more sophisticated personalities in Bangladesh politics today, and is one of the more cultured political mandarins of Dacca society. As such, he has acquired the mantle of being both an intellectual and a specialist, besides that of a scrappy tactician in the ugliest of situations. Mahbub Alam resigned from Pakistan's Foreign Service in 1967. It was a period when the Green Revolution was being projected throughout South Asia and the entire Third World, as the solution to rural poverty and underdevelopment. As an ideological panacea, it was reaching its peak in the late 1960s. Pakistan, like India, received substantial Western aid linked to new agricultural programmes. 'Green Revolution' planning was the cutting edge of national policy in Pakistan's so-called Decade of Development, as it was christened by the orthodox international economists who conceived it.

When Mahbub Alam resigned from the Foreign Service, he added the suffix *Chashi*, meaning 'farmer' in Bengali, to his name. He then joined the ranks of the green revolutionaries and organized a development project in an area called Rangunia outside of Chittagong where severe flooding had destroyed several thousand acres of *aman* paddy. In his own personal variation on what is known in Bangladesh as the Comilla Model, Chashi organized a co-operative in the Rangunia area which, with a significant infusion of government credit and foreign assistance, he soon turned into an international show-case of capitalist land reform.[14]

During Bangladesh's War of Independence Chashi went back to the business of foreign affairs as Secretary and protege to Mustaque. But after the 1971 debacle of their indiscretion with the Americans, he returned to the safer field of agriculture and the development of a theory and practice of non-socialist rural populism. After independence Chashi took over as Vice-Chairman of the Bangledesh Academy for Rural Development at Comilla, a post he still held at the time of Mujib's death.

We mention all this detail about Mahbub Alam Chashi only because numerous informed sources have spoken of his behind-the-scenes involvement in the coup against Mujib. His interest in the sociology of rural life was not purely academic; it extended to the pinnacle of political power. In the period immediately prior to the coup, a number of planning sessions regarding military action against Mujib are alleged to have taken place under Chashi's direction and mediation at Comilla. According to Comilla Academy sources, in the months before August a number of people, including Taheruddin Thakur, were frequent visitors. In 1975 Thakur, a close personal friend of Chashi's and the other principal personality on Mustaque's '71 Calcutta staff, was serving as Mujib's State Minister for Information.

On the 13th of August, two days before the coup d'état, Chashi suddenly disappeared from Comilla. In Dacca Major Rashid had already alerted Mustaque to be ready. Chashi, sources allege, was then called in from Comilla. He could not be found by colleagues expecting to meet him on Academy business. But on August 15th he was found. That morning Chashi and Thakur turned up at the Dacca studios of Bangladesh Radio to sit at Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed's side and to announce: 'Mujib is dead. Mustaque is President.' Back at the Comilla Academy, Chashi's colleagues nodded their heads to each other. Now they understood why he could not be found for two days and what all those evening meetings on the Swanivar agricultural programme had been about. Bangladesh's *Eminence Grise* had momentarily revealed himself.

The military men who actually killed Mujib appear to have been brought firmly into the Mustaque circle's scheme of things only in late March or early April. The Majors had ideas of their own before that, but lacked a political glove to fit their gun hand into. Mustaque and his political circle were in the process of carefully checking military contacts whom they could adopt and integrate into their own strategy. Major Rashid was a relative of Mustaque's, but Mustaque's group preferred a senior officers' coup d'état. According to Bangladesh military sources, approaches were made to the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Major-General Ziaur Rahman, or Zia, as he is generally known. Within the Army's upper echelon it was known that he was becoming more and more restless over the growing corruption of the Mujib regime and the humiliation the army had suffered when it was pulled off anti-smuggling operations in May 1974. In addition, the Army had become increasingly disgruntled with the emergence and growth of a separate paramilitary organization known as the Rakhi Bahini. It was considered to be Mujib's most loyal armed force and principal counterweight to any ambitions Bangladesh's military officers might ultimately develop. The Rakhi Bahini in the 1973-74 period earned a reputation for ruthlessness in the suppression of internal dissent, second only to what the Army itself would do three years later. As a greater share of new equipment and funds found its way to the Rakhi Bahini and drew allocations away from the Army, resentment grew within the traditional military services.

Mustaque's representative in the approach to Zia is alleged by Bangladesh military sources to have been Chashi. General Zia, these sources report, expressed interest in the proposed plan, but reluctance to take the lead in the required military action. Then on 20 March 1975 Major Rashid approached General Zia with his own proposal. The junior officers had already worked out a plan, he told Zia, and they wanted his support and his leadership. Again Zia temporized. According to Rashid, Zia told him that as a senior officer he could not be involved, but if the junior officers were prepared, they should go ahead.

Having failed to secure reliable leadership for the coup from the senior officer cadre, the Mustaque circle linked up with the junior officers' plot. While they may have preferred a senior officers' coup, they secured the next best option. Once they believed they had Zia's implicit agreement, they were willing to go ahead with a second echelon organization. For their part, with General Zia's neutrality or even tacit support assured, the junior officers could move ahead without fear that Zia would throw his forces against them after the coup. With this set, from April onwards the scheme moved to maturity.

The Old Nexus and a New Nemesis

No comprehensive analysis of the coup d'état against Mujib would be complete without a detailed examination of Bangladesh's principal intelligence agency, the National Security Intelligence (N.S.I.). It has been suggested by several sources familiar with the N.S.I. and the events of August 1975, that either it was completely incompetent in its detection of the coup, or that what happened was with the complicity of a significant faction in the agency. While the first consideration is not implausible, the second is closer to reality.

From a careful examination of the sequence of events and appointments which occurred immediately after Mujib's killing, and according to statements from high level civilian and military Bengali sources, a section of the N.S.I. appears to have been intimately involved in the planning of the coup which toppled Mujib.

Immediately after Mujib was killed, Mustaque appointed A.B.S. Safdar as Director-General of the N.S.I. As with others of his colleagues, Safdar's career is worth examining in some detail within the context of the Mujib coup. Senior ministry sources, together with informants in the Bangladesh Army, allege that Safdar was intimately linked to the plot against Mujib. Moreover, Safdar is said to have acted as the principal liaison with the American Embassy's C.I.A. Station Chief, Philip Cherry. When interviewed, Cherry initially denied ever having met Safdar. Subsequently he did admit having encountered Bangladesh's leading intelligence official at a Dacca sports club, but denied that Safdar had ever communicated any information to the U.S. Embassy regarding coup plans.

Born in Mymensingh District in 1925, Safdar joined the Pakistan police and intelligence services in 1950. By 1959 he had risen to the post of Assistant Director in the Intelligence Bureau (I.B.). He held his position as Assistant Director I.B. until 1965, when he was promoted to Deputy Director of Intelligence responsible for intelligence throughout the entire province of East Pakistan – present-day Bangladesh. During the six months of national agitations which ultimately brought down Field Marshal Ayub Khan's decade-old dictatorship in February 1969, Safdar became well known among Bengali student and political activists as the leading intelligence officer of the Ayub regime in East Pakistan. Across the province he was the man accumulating dossiers, supervising interrogations, and in command of overall surveillance operations.

His first major overseas intelligence and security training occurred in 1962/63 when, as Assistant Director of the I.B., he went to Britain for a seventeen-month training programme. It was during this period that Safdar's first significant association with Western intelligence services allegedly began. As a Bengali in Pakistan, however, he was second class. His West Pakistani superiors were always considered by the Western agencies as superior assets. After the Bangladesh crisis in 1971, Western governments, with their previous reliance on senior West Pakistan-based officers, found that useful Bengali intelligence contacts were a bit thin on the ground.

But when Pakistan's civil war erupted in March 1971, A.B.S. Safdar was far away from the mass meetings and smouldering buildings of Dacca. He was in Washington. As a new candidate under the U.S. AID's Office of Public Safety (O.P.S.) programme, he was attending the Twelfth Senior Officers' Course at the International Police Academy. [See Appendix D to this book on the International Police Academy and the East Pakistan Police.] The programme under which Safdar was being trained was part of a large operation which brought thousands of foreign police officials to the United States. The training of police forces from Third World countries was begun by America in 1955 under the Eisenhower Administration. Overseas offices known as Public Safety Missions were established in 34 countries. Initial budgets were modest until the Kennedy Administration ordered a dramatic expansion and formally established the Office of Public Safety in 1962. The conceptual stance of the Kennedy strategists was a clear one, linked directly to the Administration's great push to develop global counter-insurgency capabilities.

At the 1965 graduating ceremonies at the International Police Academy, General Maxwell Taylor, the Kennedy Administrations's leading military theorist, told the foreign police officers: 'The outstanding lesson is that we should never let another Vietnam type situation arise again. We were too late in recognizing the extent of the subversive threat. We appreciate now that every young emerging country must be constantly on the alert, watching for those symptoms which if allowed to develop unrestrained may eventually grow into a disastrous situation such as that of South Vietnam.' To General Taylor there was no question but that the gentlemen sitting before him represented the 'first line of defence' against Marxism in the Third World. 'We have learned the need for a strong police force,' he said, 'and a strong police intelligence organization to assist in identifying early the symptoms of an incipient subversive situation.'[15] They had been brought to the United States to be trained and financed in that task.

The Office of Public Safety continued training foreign police officials until it was dismantled under an Act of Congress in 1975. However, before it was shut down as an official U.S. agency, it had distributed $200 million worth of arms and equipment to foreign police organizations, had trained over 7,500 officers at the I.P.A. and other U.S. installations, and had provided basic training to over a million rank-and-file police at O.P.S.-affiliated academies abroad.[16]

What became the most well-known O.P.S. connected operation was the Phoenix programme in South Vietnam. The Phoenix ran under the direction of William Colby who was later to become Director of the C.I.A. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he described the Phoenix as an intelligence operation designed to identify cadres and members of the National Liberation Front. Before the Senate he stated that the years 1968-72, while Phoenix was under direct American supervision, 26,369 Vietnamese civilians were killed under the programme. Further testimony by C.I.A. employees confirmed thousands of murders of prisoners. In August 1971, Barton Osborn, a Phoenix official, told a Congressional Committee that not one of the Vietnamese prisoners he had seen detained in two years with Phoenix ever survived their interrogation.[17]

In response to investigations into O.P.S. operations in Vietnam, and due to the controversy, which erupted over the Costa-Gravas film *State of Siege*, the American Congress moved toward legislative action. A Senate investigating team in 1971 returned from Brazil, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic and concluded that O.P.S. ties with local security forces were so great that the United States had become 'politically identified with police terrorism'.

In 1973 the U.S. Senator from South Dakota, James Abourezk, introduced legislation aimed at restraining the American government from making 'repressive regimes even more repressive'. As of 1st July 1975 it became illegal for American aid to finance the police, prison, or law enforcement agencies of any foreign government. 'The Office of Public Safety and the International Police Academy mocks the purpose of other AID programmes,' said Abourezk in the Senate, 'and has inflicted an indelible blemish' on U.S. foreign policy.[18] However, before the Public Safety programme and the Academy reached final legislative death, the C.I.A. openly entered into a struggle to defeat the Abourezk Amendment. In a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, William Colby appealed against the new amendment declaring that police training programmes had been highly useful in obtaining foreign intelligence co-operation from those trained. *The Washington Post* reported in a column written by Jack Anderson:

> The Central Intelligence Agency has admitted in an extraordinary private letter to Senator William Fulbright that the Agency has penetrated the police forces of friendly foreign countries. The remarkable confession by C.I.A. Director William Colby came in the course of a discreet but intensive lobbying effort to keep alive U.S. support for foreign police programs. Colby told Fulbright that the 'relationships' built up with policemen through these programs have been highly useful in 'obtaining foreign intelligence' from foreign constabularies . . . . Insiders suspect that Colby's effort to defeat the Abourezk provision was actually aimed at preserving the International Police Academy, an institution dear to the hearts of spooks. According to Victor Marchetti and John Marks, authors of *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence*, the agency has funded training of foreign police at the academy and recruited spies there.[19]

Further Congressional hearings in the summer of 1974 confirmed C.I.A. penetration of foreign police forces through the O.P.S. programme. Daniel Parker, Director of the Agency for International Development, told Representative Donald Fraser, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that the O.P.S. had 'had a co-operative arrangement with the C.I.A. missions abroad'.[20] Press exposure of links between police training, public safety programmes and American intelligence agencies continued throughout 1975 with the identification of new schools and institutes geared to agent recruitment.

The Office of Public Safety Programme in Pakistan, as elsewhere, focused upon the development of critical systems – communications, management, training, intelligence and riot control – with the object of constructing a modern police infrastructure. 'Training in modern police administration and operations is programmed for middle and senior level police executives,' argued an O.P.S. Pakistan document, 'in order to develop a cadre of trained administrators who will be in a position to influence and initiate changes in present traditional, conservative, colonial oriented procedures.'[21] Within ten years the trainees would be able to influence much more than 'traditional procedures'. Before long they would be underpinning coups, counter-coups and assassinations.

Between 1961 and 1971, when East Pakistan became Bangladesh, 113 senior and middle echelon Pakistani police officers had undergone special training in the United States. In contrast to the South Vietnamese police trained over the same period and totalling 414 officers, Pakistan's contingent was large, given the huge scale of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.[22] Among the Pakistani trainees were more than 40 Bengali officers. The men who came for training were important and, if they did not already, in the years ahead they would dominate the branches of their respective services.

When the Liberation War broke out many of the O.P.S. Bengali trainees – steeped in the ideology of the Pakistani state and the security of that state – remained at their posts and became part of that minute percentage of the population which actively collaborated with the Pakistan Army. They were the Vichy of Bangladesh. What is most important about these officers is not simply their collaboration with the Pakistan Army in 1971, but their critical involvement in the events of 1975. Among the most prominent of the Bengali O.P.S. trainees was A.B.S. Safdar. Immediately after Mujib was killed, Safdar moved into the country's top intelligence post at the N.S.I. It had been a long road back for a collaborator. Careful analysis of the events shows that Safdar's largely unnoticed, unscrutinized, but immediate appointment, along with those of others, belied the spontaneous and autonomous character of the coup which the Majors claimed for themselves.

In late February 1971, exactly a month before the Pakistan Army swept through Dacca in a massive wave of killing that turned the country's political crisis into open civil war, Safdar and a colleague, Abdur Rahim, arrived in Washington to attend the International Police Academy (I.P.A.). While Bengali diplomats at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, and at embassies around the world, declared their allegiance to an independent Bangladesh, Safdar and Rahim continued with their studies at the Police Academy, taking no stand. They were initially ordered to return to active duty at Pakistan's Intelligence Bureau. However, following action by Joseph Corr, the Chief of the U.S. Public Safety Programme in Pakistan, who intervened with the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, N.A. Rizvi, both men were permitted to complete their Washington training. The following summer, with the civil war entering its most bitter phase, both Safdar and Rahim chose to return voluntarily to East Pakistan and take up active duty on the side of the Pakistani authorities. Safdar returned to intelligence and counter-insurgency duties, while Rahim took organizational command of the notorious Razakar paramilitary forces.

In the period immediately following independence, leading elements among the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army) forces called for trials of those guilty of the worst atrocities and offences. Most of the trial demands focused on captured senior officers of the Pakistan Army. Demands for justice also extended to leading Bengali police and intelligence personnel who had co-operated with the Pakistani Army throughout the civil war. After Mujib's release from detention in Pakistan, a declaration was issued that war crimes trials would be held, similar in form to those which Vichy collaborators had faced in France in 1944-45.

Following Liberation in France, summary executions of Nazi collaborators by the Resistance, mingled with an assorted settling of old scores, resulted in at least 4,500 deaths. In the more formal proceedings that followed, 124,750 people were tried, 747 were executed under sentence of treason or collaboration with the enemy in time of war and over 35,000 were sentenced to some form of imprisonment. In the bureaucracy thousands were dismissed from their positions or demoted. And yet, according to historian Robert Paxton, 'Liberated France punished a smaller proportion of its total population with prison terms than any other occupied Western European country and executed a smaller proportion than Belgium.'[23] The heavy diplomatic pressure a number of Western countries put on Bangladesh in 1972 to suspend any trials and declare a general amnesty was therefore something of a historical anomaly.

In the year that followed Bangladesh's independence, a series of international appeals, particularly from the rich Islamic states who had stood beside Pakistan, finally persuaded the now foreign aid seeking authorities in Dacca to adopt an attitude of clemency towards Pakistani Army officers accused of war crimes. Mujib finally agreed, despite protests from many who had themselves fought and suffered. The mass grave dug up at Dacca University was but one example on the ledger. However, once Pakistani officers were released from accountability, holding trials of Bengali collaborators became a more difficult process. Many of the accused collaborators were simply detained without trial for months, while others who had been in government were denied official positions, as the new authorities weighed what action to take.

Few of the intelligence and police personnel who collaborated were touched. Most were given minor posts and the rest kept their heads down or went where they would not be noticed by students or Mukti Bahini fighters. By 1973, however, the petals had started falling from the flower of independence. Many of the most militant and armed of Mujib's 1971 supporters began to turn towards radical politics. Within two years of the Independence War Mujib's regime had moved from the heroic dimension to one stained with corruption, popular disillusionment and finally national famine. In the countryside pockets of open anti-government insurgency began to appear. In the year 1973-74 nearly 3,000 Awami League officials were killed in political incidents. Mujib's advisers urged emergency measures which would bring 'law and order' under control.

As popular opinion turned from disillusionment in 1973 into aggressive opposition in 1974, Mujib discovered a need to rely on experienced police. This was the opening which the reclusive collaborators had been waiting for. In this period the graduates of Washington's I.P.A. and INPOLSE programmes, many of them active collaborators in 1971, spilled out of their closets and worked their way back into positions of authority. Not unlike post-war Germany, when the Western allies in need of reliable anti-communist security police and bureaucrats began the rehabilitation of former fascists, Mujib, faced with a new threat from radical independence fighters going into the streets or taking up arms against the Awami League, began his own rehabilitation programme. In the end this would prove to be a key to his own destruction. The only experienced state security police which he possessed were the very men who had collaborated with Pakistan in 1971 and had been die-hard ideological opponents of the Awami League for years. Safdar, in fact, had assisted in the preparation of intelligence files and dossiers used by military prosecutors in the famous Agartala Conspiracy Case against Mujib in 1969. The Agartala Trial put the Bengali nationalist and democratic movement on the world map for the first time. According to one of Mujib's trial lawyers, 'Safdar literally carried the prosecutor's briefcase into the court every day.'

It was a reflection of Mujib's own delusions that he now believed he could use and control these same men for his own purposes in 1974. When some of his aides objected to restoring these men to positions of authority, Mujib would say that, by keeping them close to him, he could keep a watchful eye on their activities. The truth was to the contrary: *they* would keep a close watch on *him*. And they were now ideally placed to co-operate in a coup against Mujib when the proper moment of crisis came. In the end, the August 1975 coup would be very much an inside job.

In late 1973, as internal security and civil order began to assume prime importance for the Mujib government, Safdar was appointed to the President's Vigilance Team – a monumental misnomer. This was a police security unit ostensibly dealing with corruption, but its operations dovetailed with the Special Branch and the N.S.I. on matters of intelligence and domestic order. Besides Safdar, the administration rehabilitated Abdur Rahim who had studied along with Safdar at the I.P.A. in Washington in 1971. Rahim, the former Director of Pakistan's Razakar forces which had fought the Mukti Bahini, was now appointed Secretary to the President. He was posted to the bureaucratic rank of Full Secretary. No police or intelligence official had ever held such senior rank, not even during Pakistan's administration of East Bengal.

When Mujib was killed two years later, the entire staff of the President's Secretariat either fled the country, or were arrested or dismissed, except for Abdur Rahim. He remained in the Secretariat and in the immediate post-coup period became a close aide to Mustaque. In October 1975, when Mustaqu met Awami League M.P.s to discuss whether new elections should be held or martial law continued, it was Rahim who sat by his side listing the items Mustaque instructed him to note down. And when Mustaque was himself toppled from power in a coup in November, to be ultimately succeeded by a right-wing military junta led by his own Chief of Staff and former co-conspirator, General Zia, Abdur Rahim again was hardly displaced. In fact he was promoted to Secretary of the Establishment Division which controls all Civil Service appointments and transfers throughout the national bureaucracy. Meanwhile, as already noted, Rahim's old Washington I.P.A. colleague, A.B.S. Safdar, became Director-General of the National Security Intelligence Agency (N.S.I.) immediately after Mujib's death and also remained in place as head of the N.S.I. after Zia's November takeover. The old boys were back in the saddle.

Other important appointments of former collaborators and Washington I.P.A. graduates were made after Mujib's removal. A.M.M. Aminur Rahman, a 1969 I.P.A. graduate, was appointed Commissioner of the newly organized paramilitary police strike force known as the Dacca Metropolitan Police, or 'blue shirts'. Rahman is well known in Dacca for his right-wing political views and his links to Islamic extremists such as Mullanah Mannan, a former member of the Al-Badhr Command Council. The Al-Badhr organization, a fanatical religious group which operated as a paramilitary arm to the Pakistan Army in 1971, was responsible for some of the worst killings during the war, particularly of nationalist intellectuals.

Other leading figures in the Bangladesh security apparatus who gained prominence after Mujib's killing were men like M.N. Huda, who served as Safdar's Deputy Director at N.S.I. As a member of Pakistan's Special Branch, Huda attended in 1963 the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (F.B.I.) National Academy in Washington and the C.I.A.-backed INPOLSE training school. Interviewed at N.S.I. headquarters in Dacca in June 1976, Huda said the answers to many questions must remain unknown. When asked whether the N.S.I. had been incompetent in discovering the conspiracy to kill Mujib or whether it was true the N.S.I. itself had been involved, Huda laughed and said the question was a very, very clever one. But he would not answer.

A.K.M. Musleuddin, a graduate of both I.P.A. (1968) and INPOLSE (1969) courses, rose to a high position in the N.S.I. after Mujib's death. Musleuddin, an alleged collaborator in 1971, is known in Dacca for his right-wing political associations, and his close links to the Muslim League.

Sayed Amir Khasru, an I.P.A. graduate and alleged collaborator in 1971, was one of the disgraced members of the police cadre Mujib began reinstating. He was appointed to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, an agency said to have misappropriated millions of dollars in relief commodities. Under General Zia's military junta, Khasru was promoted on the bureaucratic scale to Full Secretary. Again, like Safdar and Rahim's promotions, it represented a high position unprecedented for a member of the state security services.

I.P.A. and INPOLSE graduates turned up on many strategic fronts in the period after the August coup. Most notable was the successful suppression of 1975's November 7th mutiny and general uprising set in motion by the Socialist National Party (J.S.D.). This was carried out under a newly organized paramilitary police strike force. According to Bengali Home Ministry sources close to the national police, the new special units are commanded by INPOLSE graduates such as Musa Miyan Chowdhury, who is also a Deputy Director in the N.S.I. And according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the new authorities in post-coup 1975 began to undertake:

> a full-scale overhaul of Bangladesh's police and the formation of an elite

> 12,500 man 'special police force' . . . . The new 12,500 man force is divided into five 2,500 man 'armed battalions' . . . although the Government says the force is designed 'to combat crimes of a special nature', particularly where 'sophisticated weapons are involved'. It will also carry out 'special drives, mopping-up operations and other activities requiring special training and techniques'. The battalions will have no permanent base, but will 'always be in combat readiness' and available for duty anywhere in Bangladesh . . . . Reports reaching the capital indicate that gunfights, chases and mass arrests are taking place regularly.[24]

But, according to Bangladesh sources with first-hand knowledge of the new restructuring of the country's paramilitary police forces, the entire reorganization is being taken straight out of International Police Academy textbooks and development plans drawn up by American Public Safety Advisers in the 1960s. According to these same sources, officers such as Musa Miyan Chowhury are in charge of the reorganization operations. In documents (obtained under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act), Superintendent Chowdhury wrote of his training at the C.I.A.-financed INPOLSE school:

> The Riot Control Specialization Course introduced by the Academy has been of immense importance to us. It has afforded us an opportunity to learn more about the causes attributed to different kinds of riots, police intelligence in riot control, mob psychology, characteristics of the mob and its change from a crowd, theories, principles, and practices to be considered in our plan for prevention or control of riot or civil disorder. We have also learnt a good deal about the importance of prior planning, discipline, leadership, preparation for riot duty, organizational and general planning, operations in riot control, riot control formations, looking for snipers and use of force to be used in different phases of riots. We have also learnt the new defence tactics and use of batons and firearms including chemicals required in riot control situations . . . . The problems and their solutions in the POCC [Police Operations Control Center] have given us the real idea, and practical knowledge of play and the rules of the job meant for different officers in the control of riots.[25]

Whether an event is defined as 'riot control', 'counter-revolution' or 'police terror' often depends on the eye of the beholder, and is conditioned by whether they are the victims or the executors. In the case of Bangladesh, when Musa Chowdhury and his colleagues returned to Dacca from the INPOLSE course in Washington, they established the Central Police Control Room at the government's Central Secretariat. According to those who have seen it, it is a replica of the POCC in Washington. A visitor to the Washington training centre described the original centre, where elaborate tactical police war games were conducted. The account appeared in *The New Republic*, an American liberal weekly:

> At the front of the POCC is a magnetic game board on which has been

> constructed the map of a mythical city, Rio Bravos, capital of the Republic of San Martin. Students elect officers who sit at a long, V-shaped desk in front of the board. Each has a phone and access to a teletype machine. From the control booth, faculty field commanders alert the students to a communist-inspired riot at the city's university, or to a bombing attempt by communist subversives from the hostile neighbouring country, Maoland [*sic*]. The students deploy their forces on the board and plan strategies, much as they would from a real police control center.[26]

The pre-eminent purpose of such training and its replication in these countries was to assure the containment of radical political movements within those societies linked to the international system of American alliances. In Bangladesh radical politics has had a strong tradition, and for many represents a compelling reflection of underlying social conditions.

A recent International Labour Organization survey stated that, during the much heralded 'Decade of Development' between 1963 and 1973, the percentage of Bangladesh's population consuming below 1,935 calories per day increased from 40.2% to 78.5%. *This* is the Third World's 'underdevelopment' – not the much touted 'development' of articulate aid economists and international lending agencies. Overlaying this fundamental economic feature of Bangladeshi society is a police and paramilitary apparatus which is the state authority's first line of defence against social unrest and rebellion – the 'Maolands' of the International Police Academy's Rio Bravos model. In recent years it had become an increasingly brutal and plotting apparatus.

Between 1975 and 1977 the theme and the model of Rio Bravos found its specific variation in Bangladesh. More than a decade and a half of such training produced in August 1975 complicity in the coup d'état against the shaky, mildly Soviet-oriented civilian government of Mujibur Rahman. Next this intelligence nexus entered into a phase of violent suppression of new revolts within the armed forces; revolts directed against the pro-Western military junta of General Ziaur Rahman. And by 1977, two years after the August '75 coup that killed Mujib, the country had entered an entirely new chapter in modern South Asian history, albeit a grim one, with the first mass executions in the Indian subcontinent in this century[27] (the last being those carried out by the British following the 1857 Mutiny, when rebels were tied to the mouths of cannon and disciplined by death).

In the period after Mujib's fall there were even more significant appointments than the spectacular promotions of men like Safdar. Mustaque, unlike the Majors who did the killing for him, was no naive coup-maker. He and his team were prepared for the transition. They immediately appointed an experienced bureaucratic crew. The first major appointment was Shaiful Azam as Cabinet Secretary of the Central Secretariat. This position was the most senior in the entire bureaucracy and was in direct authority over each of the ministries and their secretaries. At the time of the crackdown in 1971, Azam had been Chief Secretary of the East Pakistan Provincial Government. An ardent Bengali supporter of Pakistan's cause, he remained in his post throughout the civil war, leaving for (West) Pakistan only towards the end. For Bengali nationalists Azam was a collaborator *par excellence*. He was repatriated to Bangladesh in 1973, following Mujib's declaration that he and others would be treated leniently in the interests of reconciliation among Bengalis. With Mujib dead in '75, the Vichy of '71 were now in the ascendant.

To head the Home Ministry, Mustaque immediately recalled from Rome Salauddin Ahmed, an official at the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization. Salauddin had a well-established reputation for both sophistication and toughness. In 1968-69 he had been the official in the East Pakistan Home Ministry directing counter-measures against student and working class agitation which ultimately brought down the decade-old military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. Now, after Mujib's death and under Salauddin's new suzerainty at the Home Ministry, the police and internal security budget rose by nearly 60% within a year. Together with defence, the proportion of the budget allocated for defence and internal security rose to 31% of total expenditure, four times the level of 1973. In addition to the creation of Special Police Combat Units, measures were also adopted to expand the staff of the police services from 40,000 to 70,000.[28] In the mass executions of 1977 Salauddin was the main official on the civilian side responsible, and was thus identified with hundreds of hangings which took place at Dacca Central Jail and in the district prisons.

The other major appointment Mustaque made among civilians was that of Enayethullah Khan to the Editorship of *The Bangladesh Times*, a state-owned daily. On the surface, it seemed a peculiar appointment. Khan had been the Editor of the weekly *Holiday*, a pseudo-leftist Sunday paper, that had been aggressively opposed to Mujib's regime. At the time, Khan was vaguely identified ideologically with Mohammed Toaha's East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). The essence of Khan's ideological view was that Mujib's Awami League, and its last incarnation as BAKSAL, was backed by Indian interests which in turn were backed by Soviet interests, and therefore it was incumbent upon every Bengali progressive to oppose Mujib's subordination to expansionism (India) and hegemonism (the Soviet Union). With this analysis Khondakar Mustaque was quite in agreement. Being himself a devout anti-communist made no difference to Mustaque, if some people presenting themselves as leftists would be willing to support his essentially pro-Western coup d'état. In essence, Mustaque was trying to recreate Field Marshal Ayub Khan's old political coalition which had combined the support of Pakistan's pro-Western bourgeoisie and certain pro-Peking left-wing figures who, since the Sino-Indian war in 1962, had regarded their principal political role as one of opposing New Delhi's pre-eminent power in South Asia, this task being more important than the overthrow of their own ruling classes. Enayethullah Khan, a protégé not only of Toaha, but also a close associate of Bhutto in the late 1960s, was a figure precisely in this mould.

Prior Knowledge and the Question of Complicity

We opened this account by describing and analyzing the dominant version of the 'facts' surrounding the coup d'état which killed Mujibur Rahman in August 1975. Contemporary reporting established a general and prevalent interpretation of the events, which themselves were largely unexamined in any depth. The version accepted by both the foreign and Bengali press coverage of the coup was a simple story. Mujibur Rahman's regime was in trouble. The country had just suffered a famine that had killed an estimated 50,000 peasants, for which government incompetence had been blamed. Democratic rights were increasingly being crushed by the authorities who were closing newspapers and locking more and more of Mujib's opponents away. Civil unrest and rural insurgency were growing problems. In this atmosphere, so the story went, six young majors with 300 men under their command took it upon themselves to organize a military putsch. They were said to be disgruntled and disgusted young military men acting with a mixture of motives that stretched from personal embitterment to their own messianic delusions of Islamic Bonapartism. The story emphasized that they had acted alone and unilaterally, and that *after* killing Mujib they suddenly decided to pick up Khondakar Mustaque Ahmed as a replacement. In taking on the Presidency, Mustaque was portrayed with all the innocence of a victim of circumstance. But whether Mustaque himself had taken part in a complicated plan nearly a year old involving a variety of links, remained totally unexamined.

What we have tried to do is open up the view that what happened was by no means as simple as it was made to appear. Since the coup occurred, there has been no thoughtful analysis of even the most obvious of all the contradictory phenomena. Ignored was the stark juxtaposition that, in the two years prior to the coup, it was the country's organized left-wing parties, such as the J.S.D. (Socialist National Party), the National Awami Party (Bhashani), and the underground organizations like the Sharbohara Party which had developed and mobilized public sentiment against Mujib's regime; but, when the critical moment of collapse came for Mujib, it was not from a leftist mass uprising – 'The Revolution' – as had been feared, but from a narrowly based conspiracy of the right. The challenge being developed and prepared by radical forces was pre-empted by the August events. The coup itself was an inside job by right-wing elements within Mujib's own party, own cabinet, own secretariat and his own national intelligence service who viewed Mujib's leadership as no longer capable of holding out against a left-wing challenge to their interests.

Whether or not the United States had prior knowledge of these plans cannot be conclusively settled without the power of Congressional subpoena. What is clear is that the United States had important prior relationships with the political and intelligence leadership of the coup. Still, *the issue of prior knowledge is a critical one* which any serious historical account must seek to resolve. According to American criminal law, prior knowledge of a conspiracy to commit murder defines the grounds of complicity in murder. In terms of international law and the practice of its foreign relations, the American government has clearly followed a different standard, albeit largely clandestine. Senate testimony on covert assassination operations against Lumumba, Castro, Allende, Diem and others, not to speak of the 26,369 official victims of the Phoenix Programme, had made this graphically clear. But no criminal charges have ever been brought against any official who planned or executed these murders. Beyond an incomplete public display of personal testimony about their involvement in secret operations, there has been no accountability.

Since the Church Committee hearings on intelligence abuses, various legal reforms have been proposed to regulate and thereby prohibit American involvement in illegal activity abroad. Several bills before the American Congress, such as S.2525, attempted to set forth new guidelines:

> No person acting on behalf of an entity of the intelligence community may instigate or commit any violation of the criminal statutes of the United States unless such activity is undertaken pursuant to procedures approved by the Attorney General . . . [Sec. 243].
> No special activity may be initiated or continued which has as its objective or is likely to result in . . . (A.6) the violent overthrow of the democratic government of any country; (A.7) the torture of individuals; or (A.8) the support of any action which violates human rights, conducted by the police, foreign intelligence or internal security forces of any foreign country. [Sec. 135a].

Among reformist elements in the American Congress there are still deep doubts whether such criteria can be written into law, overriding the still powerful opposition of the U.S. intelligence community and its Congressional allies. Nevertheless, within the Carter administration there has emerged at least some serious division on these questions and there has been evidence of an awkward groping toward a new standard. How far these steps will go is the question.

In an unprecedented act for a U.S. administration, Carter officials in July 1978 filed extradition petitions in Santiago, Chile, against the Director of the Chilean Secret Police, DINA, General Contreras. Two years earlier Orlando Letelier, Allende's outspoken Foreign Minister and a leader of the Chilean exiled community, was assassinated along with his research associate, Ronnie Moffit, when their car was blown apart in Washington D.C. Press investigations and public pressure led to an unusual F.B.I. investigation which revealed that the murders were a DINA operation. Most senior DINA officials, much like the N.S.I. and Safdar and company in Bangladesh, had passed through American schools such as the I.P.A./INPOLSE programmes, and had long established links with U.S. intelligence services. They played crucial roles in the Nixon/Kissinger plan to overthrow Allende in September 1973. That the United States was prepared to initiate proceedings against its former clients in the killing of Letelier was itself unusual, although there is still widespread cynicism in Washington on the question of how far Carter will actually go, and whether action hitherto is simply due to the blatancy of the crime within a mile of the White House. 'Clients, even demoted ones,' says a close Washington observer of the case, 'should know better. Uncle Sam has etiquette at home, if not abroad. DINA overstepped Papa [C.I.A.] and that isn't done in this town to a Communist, a Socialist, or an anti-Communist politician.' The proceedings against Contreras and others of the DINA indicate that the Senate investigations, despite their serious limitations, have continued to have some important after-effects.

In the case of Bangladesh in 1975 the important issue of control, direction and responsibility for American policy returns repeatedly to the question of prior knowledge of the coup which killed Mujib. At the most superficial level some argue that if the United States had not had prior knowledge of what was about to happen, then American intelligence would have been failing in its capability. This view abstracts from the precise mechanisms by which such knowledge is acquired and presupposes the mythical all-knowing dimension of Western intelligence capabilities. If, however, such knowledge were acquired from persons who for years had been directly linked to the United States as intelligence assets, and these same people were in fact directly involved in the execution of the coup, then the question of prior knowledge takes on a larger, much deeper dimension. When and under what conditions does prior knowledge constitute complicity?

'The C.I.A. knew many times about planned coup attempts against foreign leaders,' said John Marks, 'Assuming that the Agency was not directly involved, the key decision was whether or not to tip off the leader. If he were a friend of the U.S. government and the C.I.A., he would probably be warned. And, if he were somebody that they would just as soon be rid of, they would remain silent.' What occurred in Cyprus was an example. The U.S. had tipped Makarios off about numerous coup attempts, except for the last one. The U.S. appears to have had prior knowledge of the action, but no longer considered the Archbishop's presence to be consistent with its objectives. On 14 July 1974 Makarios was toppled from power in a military coup backed by the Greek military junta.[29]

The Great Canard

In an extended interview (printed at the end of this book), Philip Cherry, the C.I.A.'s Chief of Station in Dacca at the time of the August '75 coup, has denied any prior knowledge of or U.S. involvement in the coup which killed Mujib. Cherry's denial of any prior intelligence, or link between the coup actors and the United States, is in direct opposition to the statements of State Department sources and to what he had previously discussed with an American journalist in Dacca in December 1975.

When asked if the U.S. had had prior information of the August coup, or if any American official could have given encouragement to members of Mustaque's circle, Cherry replied:

> Absolutely not. Absolutely not in Bangladesh, in 1975, or 1974, or anytime that I know of. There were several coups there, as you know. At no time did the U.S. Government have prior knowledge that any of them would take place. We did not know when any of the coups were about to take place. Let me also say throughout those months and years there were all kinds of coup rumours going on at all times. And, there were many times when political officers there, all of us at the Embassy, would be writing reports based upon the reports they were picking up, and these were from a variety of people. But, at no time to my knowledge did Mustaque, or anybody under his command, come to the Embassy and tell us anything . . . . I can give you a full denial that I or anybody I knew at the Embassy in Dacca had anything to do with the coup that overthrew Mujib. We had excellent relations with his government. It was not up to us to decide how that government was to be changed, and we were not involved in any coup attempt. And I can say that for certain.

When Cherry discussed the serious instability of the Mujib regime from the end of 1974 onwards, and the U.S. attitude to this political uncertainty and possible upheaval, he stated in the interview: 'Look, we had long discussions about this very thing at the time. And we knew that this was a possibility. We knew that Mujib was in trouble. We also knew that no matter what happened there, no matter who overthrew Mujib, or what overthrew Mujib, we also knew we would be blamed for it. That the American Embassy would be blamed for it. Because Mujib had Mrs. Gandhi's backing and a lot of Soviet influence there as well; that no matter what happened [we would be blamed] . So we were extra careful to be super clean; to make sure all of us were directed by Ambassador Boster; to cut any contact which would possibly give credence to the theory we knew was going to come about. We indeed followed Ambassador Boster's instructions.'

Cherry denied in the interview that he knew Mahbub Alam Chashi, Taheruddin Thakur or A.B.S. Safdar – three people allegedly linked to the planning of the coup. Cherry said he had of course heard some of their names, but had never met any of them. Safdar became Director-General of the National Security Intelligence agency of Bangladesh immediately after Mujib's death. Cherry admitted later in the interview that he had in fact met Safdar. However, he stressed that whatever happened in 1975 'the Bangladeshis were doing it to themselves'.

'It's a great canard,' he said, 'to think any coup takes place because of any [outside] government involvement. Almost always coups take place because of the people themselves.' When reminded that Senate inquiries had established that certain critical coups, such as those against Allende, Diem, Sihanouk and others, had occurred with U.S. backing. Cherry said, 'That may have happened years ago. But, boy! That's long since over! Many years over.'

Cherry did, however, try to make a distinction between politicians who may have approached the U.S. Embassy for support in their coup plans and actual U.S. government support. His comment was made in the context of a question concerning the Mustaque network's earlier contacts with the U.S. in Calcutta in 1971. 'There is one thing,' he said, 'There are politicans who frequently approach Embassies and perhaps have contacts there. They think they may have contacts. But that's a far cry from any of those Embassies involved in assisting them in involvement in a coup. A political officer's job is to assist his government by providing information on what is going on and a good political officer has many contacts. But, that does not mean he is advising these politicians or coup leaders to overthrow governments.'

This is known as the 'fine line'. In an era of super-power politics and contention over client states in the globe's underdeveloped periphery, it has been rare for crucially strategic putsches to be exercises of nationals of a particular country, as Philip Cherry has put it, 'doing it to themselves' without outside assurances of strategic support from powerful centres. But the fine line consists of the distinction between more or less passive involvement in a coming pro-American coup d'état and active involvement in its promotion. In the covert actions organized against Arbenz, Mossadeq, Allende, Castro, Lumumba and others, the active organization of coup or assassination plans was centrally organized, promoted and controlled by American intelligence. But, even in the 1973 coup in Chile against Allende, the C.I.A. claimed that by the time it went off it had 'separated' itself from the military plots against him. Senate investigations revealed otherwise. In the case of operations to kill Castro and replace the Havana authorities with a pro-Western regime, Desmond Fitzgerald, the C.I.A. head of the Cuban operation, told Major Rolando Cubela (known as AM/LASH) that the U.S. would provide support *only after a successful coup.* At this stage, the U.S. had given up on Mafia co-operation and were looking to pull an 'inside job'. Cubela, a medical doctor and former Deputy Minister of the Interior, was sufficiently well placed and reliable, the C.I.A. believed, to carry out the assassination, which would be followed up by a coup organized by other operatives.[30]

But the Arbenz/Mossadeq/Allende/Castro activist model is not necessarily the rule. In strategic cases, or even in important transitions such as that of Diem's fall in '63, the alleged links with the Indonesian events in '65, or the Philippines' move into Marcos' Martial Law, the U.S. has historically preferred the road of nationals 'doing it to themselves'. That is, the pro-Western factions in the military, police, intelligence, bureaucracy and appropriate political parties 'doing it to' whatever anti-American democrats, socialists, or communist elements may be threatening 'normalcy' and 'regional stability'. The careful pre-programming aspect of U.S. military, police and intelligence training for foreign nationals carried out over the past three decades has been precisely developed to establish 'contacts' and 'assets' for just such strategic eventualities. It is in such cases that the 'winks' and 'nods' and euphemisms about 'getting rid of' and 'eliminating' or the U.S. 'favouring better conditions for economic development,' are all that is needed to give a signal of support to Bangladeshi, Indonesian, or Vietnamese right-wing military and political factions, facing their own crisis of position, to go forward and putsch it out with their enemies. The Lon Nol coup against Sihanouk in Cambodia was precisely in this mould.[31] A well placed 'nod', a small 'shove' for confidence, given to the right people at the right moment by a major power, can invoke a significant historical transition, while hardly lifting a finger, and without the implied risks to careers or reputations by the kind of scrutiny potentially involved in the more activist Allende-style covert operations. According to insiders, when a coup d'état is viewed as a policy necessity, then the 'nodded' form is the style most preferred by the more sophisticated strategists of U.S. policy execution.

Bengali sources have argued to us that this is precisely the mould in which the August '75 events in Bangladesh occurred. Bengali right-wing elements, stretching from a faction of the Awami League to the Bengali intelligence and military services, with long associations, largely clandestine, with U.S. and British agencies, did indeed organize the coup. But in order to feel secure enough to move forward on an operational level, they believed they must have some indication, a 'nod' so to speak, of American and Islamic bloc support. The United States, despite its deep disagreements with many of Mujib's 'doubly-aligned' policies, did support over 50% of the expenditure of his government. This continued support had to be assured after the coup if a successor regime were not to collapse. According to Bengali sources, the type of assurance given by the U.S. took the form: *'If you succeed we are with you, if you fail we've never heard of you.'*

The difficulty, according to State Department sources, came after the initia contacts were made, and as the impact of the Church Committee investigations began having its nervous effect on American Embassies around the world. Here one runs into conflicting statements from State Department and C.I.A. sources over which sections in the Embassy 'broke off contact' and which sections allegedly did not. With nearly all relevant documents denied to us despite Freedom of Information Act applications, it is as yet impossible to corroborate and resolve these conflicts in testimony.

However, if one were to accept on face value the statements of Philip Cherry, former C.I.A. Station Chief in Dacca, one might wonder if the various U.S. intelligence agencies, C.I.A., N.S.A. and D.I.A., having nurtured, cultivated and developed a network over more than a decade, suddenly found that its early creation had grown into a mature assertive Juggernaut, ready for action and difficult to disengage from. This issue applies not simply to Bangladesh, but to Iran, Brazil, Argentina, Nicaragua, Pakistan and elsewhere where the legacy of Anglo-American constructed networks prone to military dictatorship have become a new nemesis for the 'human rights' style foreign policy of the Carterite liberals. For a quarter of a century the United States has been bent on a policy of global counter-insurgency and in this time has reared-up an enormous Juggernaut. These are the political, military and intelligence structures, which today are the dominant power in many Third World dictatorships.

What Cherry expressed in his interview, when referring to those who 'think they may have contacts' when they approach U.S. Embassies for support, may indeed reflect this very dilemma of the Juggernaut and the changes then occurring in U.S. politics. But why did Cherry's 'they' think they had contacts? On what basis, on what past experience? Cherry would have us believe that any Bangladeshi discussing coup prospects with American officials would have been listened to and shown the door. State Department sources contradict this; they state repeated contacts did happen in late 1974. And covert contacts allegedly continued until the coup. However, Cherry's statements may reflect what was a real internal dilemma for the American government and its overseas branches. The Church Committee hearings raised, as never before, the possibility of public disclosure of legally questionable covert operations. If what Cherry has said is true – which we are not yet prepared to accept without further evidence – then it might be plausible that, in the midst of the 1975 crisis which the Senate Intelligence Committee investigations had wrought for the Agency as a whole, the C.I.A. station in Dacca may have attempted to disengage from its former clients and assets, 'to be super clean' as Cherry puts it, while Senator Frank Church was busy digging up C.I.A. skeletons across the globe. But, while the U.S. may, towards the end, have tried to keep its distance in Bangladesh, the American trained Juggernaut rolled on towards the coup it knew the United States would not condemn once it had happened. The Soviets would lose their semi-satellite and America would regain its old SEATO-style friend once more, poor but aligned with the West, after a hiatus of four years. And that figure, Mujibur Rahman, who had stuck so unpleasantly in Secretary of State Kissinger's eye in 1971, whose country's crisis then appeared to threaten the success of Kissinger's crucial U.S.-China negotiations, would be gone without any regrets from the Washington establishment. But, if Cherry's denials are not accurate, then the investigative door is still wide open.

Kissinger's 'Foreign Enemies List'

This leads us to the last facet of this story. Very little has been written about Henry Kissinger's attitudes or role in the crisis of Bangladesh's emergence or in subsequent events. There have been *The Anderson Papers* and a few peripheral asides in biographical works on the former U.S. Secretary of State. But, when compared to the public attention given to Vietnam, Chile or the Middle East, Bangladesh has remained obscure and peripheral for the U.S. public and press, despite the extreme but generally unknown crisis it caused within Kissinger's foreign policy bureaucracy in 1971. [See Appendix A.]

What is not well known is the extent to which Kissinger regarded events in Bangladesh as a deep personal defeat in the realm of foreign policy, and how seriously they threatened his place in the Nixon administration at the time. In an extended interview with the authors, a former member of Kissinger's staff at the National Security Council, Roger Morris, recounted the deep animosity toward Mujib which Kissinger sustained after 1971. Morris, who is the author of the critical biography, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger & American Foreign Policy,* resigned from Kissinger's staff the day before the United States' invasion of Cambodia.[32] 'In early 1975,' said Morris, 'I was interviewing for my book a man who was then one of Kissinger's closest aides and most senior confidants. I had known him well. In utter seriousness and not at all as a criticism of Kissinger's policy, he said, there had been three nemeses of American foreign policy in the Kissinger era. These were the three 'most hated men' on Kissinger's foreign 'enemies list'. He said they were Allende, Thieu, and Mujib.[33]

Allende was rather obvious, according to Morris. America's ally, Nguyen Van Thieu, was a bit more difficult to fathom for a place on such a list. But Thieu was despised because he never performed precisely as the pliant American puppet he was intended to be. During the Paris peace negotiations he emerged again and again as an obstruction to 'the deal Kissinger was trying to cut with the North Vietnamese'. Each time Kissinger turned in Paris, Thieu was expected to twist accordingly and simultaneously in Saigon. But he did not perform on cue, and the Americans were always having to send Alexander Haig or some other emissary to Saigon to twist his arm. The peace negotiations and their timing *vis-a-vis* other Kissinger initiatives were extremely important. Moreover, Kissinger's style in Paris of making grand announcements such as 'peace is at hand', only to be delayed by Thieu's recalcitrance, were giving the Nixon Administration an embarrassing press at home and fuelling the critics in an ever more strident anti-war movement. So it was that Nguyen Van Thieu found himself alongside Allende on Kissinger's private 'enemies list'. 'It was not a matter of having allies or having enemies or adversaries,' explained Morris, 'but simply these people had upset the apple cart in various ways.'

'When compared to the others,' he said, 'Mujib I would have thought wasn't quite in that league. On the other hand, Kissinger felt the events in East Pakistan [in 1971] were so damaging and so distracting and so potentially disastrous for his China diplomacy on which so much else rested, including the Vietnam negotiations . . . . And here was this unnecessary irritation on the flank; a kind of obstreperous politician who was not behaving in a proper way.' In addition, Kissinger's position in the Nixon administration was not at all secure at this stage. Nixon's two closest advisers on domestic policy, H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, both despised Kissinger and sought his removal from the Administration's inner circle. In 1971 it was not at all certain that he would be carried over into the second administration. This, of course, was prior to the China breakthrough, the Paris negotiations on Vietnam, and the Salt agreement. 'It is hard to imagine now,' says Morris, 'but if one looks back at the time [1971] one remembers a lot of talk about John Connolly becoming Secretary of State and Kissinger saying to his friends in the press that if that happens, "I will go".' In another, but rather sympathetic biography written by Bernard and Marvin Kalb, Kissinger recalls the Bangladesh crisis and says, 'Haldeman almost got me on that one.'

'For the most part the only stain on the record up to this time,' Morris continues, ' with the exception of the anti-war opposition, has been South Asia. It is the only place the administration has been under public fire in the Congress or in the press. It is the only place where Kissinger diplomacy is seen to be ineffectual and where no magic could be made to work. It is the only place where American interests have been reversed and where there is an obvious Soviet inroad and obvious Soviet advantage . . . . And in a sense the Bangladesh crisis is used as the last major challenge Kissinger's rivals within the White House mounted against him. After that Watergate overtakes them all.'

What results, according to Morris, is a residue, a blended aftermath of embarrassment and political vindictiveness which sticks with Kissinger in the years ahead. It is worth quoting Morris's remarks at some length in this respect:

> I don't want to exaggerate the importance of Bangladesh, because it wasn't a strategic defeat for American interests in the long run. It didn't create any great shift in the balance of power, but it was an extraordinary embarrassment.
>
> Mujib's welcome back as an exiled persecuted leader, I think, was probably the most embarrassing single event in American foreign policy since Castro rode into Havana on a tank. If you look at the record of American intervention around the world, to keep various politicians from assuming power, either covert or overt intervention, and if you look at events in the world prior to the fall of South Vietnam, Washington is by and large successful by hook or by crook. There are really no obstreperous regimes around. The Makarios regime in Cyprus comes to power by compromise, almost as an American creation ironically enough, although he is regarded as a Castro-like figure. Allende comes to power for sure in a free election which the Americans try to buy off with a lot of covert intervention. But, it is not the national or international scandal at the time. It happens almost quietly. And it's because it happens so quietly that the American intervention proceeds after he takes power. But, Mujib comes to power as a defiance, as a real defeat for America and America's client [Pakistan]; and as a great embarrassment for the Administration.
>
> One thinks of Henry Kissinger as being a traditional 19th century diplomat. His mentors, models and heroes are all 19th century. One would then think the adage would be, 'No permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests'. This would have dictated that the United States immediately welcome Mujib and embrace the regime; to try to keep it within the camp. But there was, as I have said, Kissinger's vindictive streak. It ran through it, in the sense, he [Mujib] is not our man. And, if he is not our man, there is no such thing as permanent interests. Now it is a matter of getting our people in and their people out.
>
> Kissinger is really Bismarckian in the sense that the world is essentially conducted by heroes and non-heroes or anti-heroes. Personalities matter enormously. He undoubtedly did see Mujib, and Allende, and Thieu, and Makarios, and others who gave him problems as being there on the stage to give Henry Kissinger a bad time. He took the Bangladesh events as a personal defeat.
>
> It certainly was perceived as a major political setback for the administration. It spoiled things badly for a while . . . . The sense of paranoia, the sense of being able to run the world at home and abroad, the sense of irritation, betrayal, and venom toward people who get in the way is all

> of a piece at this time. It's an era, as we know from the Watergate investigation, when lasting animosities are formed by the administration and accounts are taken for later reckoning. Their attitude toward the world, toward Allende, toward Mujib, toward Thieu, toward Makarios, toward anyone who got in their way in effect was very much a vindictive one. Very much a matter of you're going to get your come-uppance.

The Perils of a Client State

In the autumn of 1974 Mujib visited the United States. Ostensibly he had come to address the U.N. General Assembly in New York. It was less than a year before the coup which would bring his death. His three-year-old regime was in severe crisis. That summer, the worst South Asian floods in two decades had combined with the regime's own administrative ineptness and internal corruption to bring about the worst famine the region had seen since 1943. The famine spread not only across Bangladesh, but through the entire northeastern belt of India. In Bangladesh the price of rice rose 1,000% above 1970 levels in some districts. Mujib had once promised in 1970 that the price of rice would fall by half, once East Bengal had been made free from West Pakistan's exploitation. During the autumn famine, it is estimated that at least 50,000 peasants died in Bangladesh alone. According to Bengali diplomats in Washington, there was an air of smug satisfaction among Americai officials who had been known to sympathize with Pakistan in 1971, as Mujib now arrived to appeal for more American relief assistance. The pro-Bangladesh lobby in the State Department had already been quashed in Kissinger's internal departmental campaign against 'clientism' in the foreign service. 'Mujib was floundering and in trouble', recalled one Bangladesh diplomat, 'and they seemed to take enormous pleasure in his awkward moment.'

It is customary that when a Head of State of a friendly country visits the United Nations for the first time, he is also invited to Washington and accordec a formal reception by the American government as a matter of courtesy and protocol. In Mujib's case the U.S. authorities left any arrangements for a Washington visit completely vague despite enquiries from the Bangladesh side. Finally, at the last moment, when it was clear Mujib would visit Washington in any case to meet friends of Bangladesh in the Congress, the State Department did arrange a brief 15 minute session with President Ford at the White House. According to Dr. Kamal Hossain, Mujib's Foreign Minister who accompanied him to Washington, 'The level of protocol treatment accorded during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington following his visit to the U.N. General Assembly reflected a clear degree of coolness. This was apparent from the fact that there was only a brief meeting with the President and a marked absence of the usual hospitality extended on such occasions.'[34]

Kissinger, who was Secretary of State by then, stayed away from any Washington meetings, although it was normal and customary for him to have been present. The Bangladesh delegation was offered an official luncheon hosted by a minor cabinet official. Since such luncheons were normally hosted by the President or Secretary of State, the Bengali side declined the invitation believing it to be rude, if not an insult. The Bangladesh delegation returned to Dacca knowing what it is to be rebuffed in Washington.

Kissinger did meet Mujib briefly while attending the U.N. session in New York. The customary photographs were taken for home consumption. However, requests for additional American food shipments fell on deaf ears. It was the year 'triage theory' was a vulgar intellectual cocktail point in America.[35] Moreover, following the 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East, Kissinger had moved boldly to befriend Sadat, and what surplus wheat was not being taken by the vast Soviet purchases that year, the Americans were shipping to Egypt. Strategy, not poverty, was the criterion. 'In Kissinger's view there was very much a distant hands off attitude toward them,' recalls Roger Morris, 'Since they had the audacity to become independent of one of my client vassals [Pakistan], they will damn well float on their own for a while. In effect, there was a feeling they were now somebody else's client.'

Bangladesh desperately needed food and finance. A major foreign exchange crisis loomed and shortages in government-held food reserves became severe. It was the rude end to the high living of the first two years of the post-independence relief bonanza when nearly $2,000 million worth of commodities, aid, contracts and international business poured in from the overseas cornucopia. The Soviets, facing their own severe grain crisis in 1974, were not giving much to anyone. India was the Soviet Union's first subcontinental priority and their grain loans went to a crisis-ridden New Delhi. It was under such circumstances that Mujib travelled to the United States in the hope of realigning; of shifting the emphasis of his own 'double alignment' from one superpower to the other; of burying the indignities of Kissinger's 'tilt' and insults from '71; and of recovering the lost political alliance with America. After all, it had been Mujib who had supported Pakistan's joining of the American military alliance, SEATO, in the 1950s, thus splitting Pakistan's democratic movement down the middle. His refurbished theory argued that if the White House in 1971 had followed the path of the State Department's '30 Dissenters' and had supported the results of the national elections rather than their suppression, then the Awami League would never have been forced into a strategic alignment with the Soviets. It was this that the Bangladesh leader, faced with the conjuncture of his own desperate internal economic crisis with that of the world commodity inflation of 1973-74, now wished to make clear to the Americans. Frankly, Kissinger was not interested.

Instead, what the American AID economists and Western representatives in the World Bank wanted was a telling quid pro quo prior to any financial bail-out. In October 1974, after more than two years of determined resistance, Bangladesh crumbled before 'aid donor' pressure and agreed to the formation of a multinational aid consortium. A 24-nation Aid Bangladesh Club was formed and was chaired by the World Bank. Previously, Bangladesh had only accepted aid on a negotiated bilateral basis, agreed on state-to-state terms, preferring to avoid what the State Planning Commission considered a greater exercise of foreign economic leverage implicit in the co-ordinated consortium approach. The proposed so-called 'reform' package was one-directional and typical of orthodox American AID cum World Bank economics: a 50% devaluation of the Bangladesh Taka, denationalization and disinvestment of state owned industries, import liberalization and new rules favouring the private sector and foreign investment. We reported in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 'Critics of the new aid consortium argue that Bangladesh has had to barter away the last vestiges of its original commitment to the ideals of 'socialist planning' in return for short term relief . . . The outlines of [the] "reform" programme are said to have been made clear to the Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his economic entourage during their recent Washington visit.'[36]

In November '74 Kissinger made a brief whistle-stop tour of South Asia. The main purpose of his visit was India where he announced America's belated recognition of New Delhi's regional hegemony. His advisers had been urging even the briefest of South Asian trips for a long time. His travels around the Middle East, Indochina, China and the Soviet Union had left the subcontinental politicals feeling extremely neglected. Kissinger booked an eight-hour stop in Dacca at the end of his South Asian journey. It was one of those situations where you could not visit India without visiting its sensitive neighbours, Pakistan and Bangladesh – if only for a moment.

On the eve of this briefest of visits, Mujib made the supreme political signal towards the Americans – at least from his point of view – and forced the resignation of his Finance Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, from his cabinet. Reported the *Far Eastern Economic Review:*

> The fact that Tajuddin's removal occurred on the eve of American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's first visit to Dacca has implications which cannot be brushed aside. Tajuddin, as the first Prime Minister, had once proudly declared that Bangladesh could never accept aid from any country which had been opposed to its move for independence. The unmistakable target of Tajuddin's original remark had been the United States and Kissinger's policy, which brought ships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet sailing into the Bay of Bengal . . . . [Tajuddin's] supporters insist that he was genuinely frustrated with the deteriorating economic situation, the retreat from so-called 'socialist planning', and the external drift toward the 'capitalist' world . . . . [On his return from Washington two weeks before his forced resignation, Tajuddin's] remarks to journalists went even further into the realm of the taboo. He said his own impressions of the Prime Minister's recent visit to Washington and meeting with President Gerald Ford were quite different from that which the Bangladesh press had given the public. At the time of the visit, the official media lauded the journey as the diplomatic pinnacle of the Prime Minister's active foreign policy . . . . Only four days before his forced resignation, Tajuddin was pictured on the front page of every major Dacca daily, meeting the Soviet Ambassador, Andre Fomin. The Indian High Commissioner also paid a diplomatic call on the Finance Minister. Nevertheless, despite these two expressions of international backing, Sheikh Mujib was determined to oust Tajuddin . . . .[37]

Just over a year later on 5 November 1975, three months after the pro-American Mustaque coup d'état had killed Mujib, the 'pro-Soviet', 'pro-Indian' Tajuddin would be bayoneted to death in Dacca Central Jail – allegedly by a murder squad linked to Mustaque's military faction and a high level section of the American trained N.S.I.

But well before all that, Henry Kissinger arrived in Dacca for his brief eight-hour visit. The decks had been cleared for his touchdown: Tajuddin had been eliminated from the nation's cabinet and the regime had more or less agreed to capitulate to the economic terms set out by the World Bank and USAID in Washington the month before. Faced with international bankruptcy and the suspension of Dacca's financial credit on international markets, Mujib and his advisers had run to appease the United States. But, as in the past, even these concessions mattered little to the Americans and Kissinger. Such are the dilemmas and inequities of relations between powerful patrons and relatively insignificant client states in international affairs. In Bangladesh, Mujib had executed a traumatic reversal, cannibalizing some of his main political supporters in the hope of American finance bailing him out of the economic crisis. In Bangladesh these manoeuvres and transformations were of tremendous political significance. But to the sought after patron, the U.S. government, it was like dust on a lapel. Kissinger had many things on his mind: Cyprus, the Middle East, Indochina. In the great events of the 'great scheme', Bangladesh counted mainly as a distraction and a bitter memory from the 1971 days. Within a month after Kissinger's visit to Dacca, according to a high-level U.S. source, then stationed at the American Embassy in Dacca, the first regular contacts with the 'coup planning cell' began.

During that half-day he spent in Bangladesh, Kissinger emerged from a two-hour session with Mujib at *Gonobhavan* (The House of the People) to meet the press. He told journalists that he was honoured to meet Mujib, and called him a man of 'vast conception'. Kissinger said he had rarely met a man who was the Father of his Nation, and this was a particularly unique experience for him. For those who listened to Kissinger's dead-pan delivery that day, there was a slight trace of sarcasm in his voice. When asked by a correspondent why he had ordered the U.S. aircraft carrier, Enterprise, into the Bay of Bengal in 1971, if indeed Mujib's vision had been such a 'vast conception', Kissinger declined to answer journalists' questions. The press conference, which reporters had waited two hours for, lasted only three minutes.

In the end, the American-backed World Bank Consortium meeting in Paris did provide the short-term financial lease of life which the hard pressed regime in Dacca had begged and overthrown all previous criteria for. The consortium extended credits worth $950 million, more than double the previous year's disbursement of $348 million.[38] Letters of credit from Bangladesh's National Bank were again being accepted on the international financial markets. For the short term the crisis would pass, but into a future of even deeper indebtedness.

The political support which Mujib's governemnt had hoped to gain from the United States, following its numerous concessions on internal economic policies, the administration of foreign aid and the elimination of known anti-American personalities from the Cabinet, never really materialized. Mujib's concessions were, in a sense, a desperate reaction to the crisis, not a firm commitment to principle, and not necessarily a position a patron would bank on for the future. Many Western diplomats, then in Dacca, were already openly speculating on how long he would last, faced with growing internal unrest, in spite of how far he had gone. Moreover, Mujib had a sentimental political streak, born out of the decade of his opposition politics and the years he had spent in prison, which sometimes inhibited him. After the first concessions, he moved slowly on the implementation of the complete economic 'reform package', being pressed on him by the World Bank and AID Consortium. To have gone all the way would have meant the final abandonment and alienation of those political forces in the working class and student movement which had provided the militant basis of the Awami League's popularity in the 1970 elections. Furthermore these forces had, by and large, already become his most intense opposition. Nevertheless, he hesitated. Then, suddenly, partly because his gesture to the Americans had gained him so little politically, partly as a result of his own ambivalence and partly because the sense of political crisis in the aftermath of the famine intensified rather than let up, Mujib swerved again. Like the final act of a magician trying to pull a rabbit out of an old hat, Mujib announced the 'Second Revolution', where indeed the first had never occurred. He amended the constitution, eliminating the office of Prime Minister, and made himself President without the authority of a parliament over him. This increased the central authority of the executive. Opposition newspapers and political parties were banned and the old Awami League was reformed into a grouping called BAKSAL. It was a single party formation which linked up with the two principal pro-Moscow groups – the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Moni Singh) and the National Awami Party (Muzzafar). Now, as President, Mujib announced Emergency measures which would carry out the Second Revolution. For Western embassies, it all smacked of Mujib's return to Soviet political influence and represented the moment where they finally gave up on this Makarios-like figure. The pro-Western coup d'état was only half a year away, as rumours of Mujib's doom boiled away in Dacca.

'The Need to Know' – Nothing

A number of contradictions between State Department and C.I.A. sources emerge from our research into the coup which brought Mujib's so-called Second Revolution to such a deadly end in August 1975. This is hardly surprising. In an extended investigation of so involved an incident, we experienced, in our contact with U.S. officials, a phenomenon which the House Select Committee on Intelligence, the Pike Committee, found quite standard. With regard to our repeated requests, under the Freedom of Information Act, for official documentary evidence to resolve the obvious contradictions amongst our interviewed sources, we experienced a sequence of responses identical to that of the Pike Committee. In its final report to Congress it stated the following:

> What arrived in response to our subpoenas showed nothing – because it was mostly deletions. The deletions came in all shapes and forms. Typically, there would be one line left on a page saying, 'A C.I.A. project telephonically approved' or 'The Committee voted to approve a C.I.A. Paper entitled [title deleted]'. Often, if there had been numerous items considered at a meeting, the deletions themselves had been cut and pasted together. For example, item eight might follow item one, giving the impression that only two items had been considered that day. Sometimes there would be only one word left on a page – 'Chile' – nothing else, anywhere; but it was still classified top secret. The information, needless to say, was worthless.[39]

Moreover, we found in the course of our research how effective the practice known in the U.S. intelligence community as 'compartmentation' actually is. This is a system, employed both by the State Department and intelligence services, which restricts distribution of information, even among officials with security clearances. What struck us, in the course of several interviews, was how truly restrictive the procedure of a 'need to know' or knowledge by 'compartment' truly is in the foreign service and intelligence bureaucracies. Many officials know only a few isolated parts, segments of what makes up the whole history of a period. The 'need to know' procedure has thus, more often than not, become an official form of tunnel vision. Many may know a segment, but never the whole. 'The key to exercising oversight is knowledge,' wrote the Pike Committee in its section on the Congressional right to official documents. 'This translates into a need for access to information often held by the agencies themselves, about events in distant places.'[40] Unlike the Pike Committee, we did not have subpoena power to command documents denied to us. However, we did have something significant which Congressional investigators often lacked in comparable situations. We had access to many confidential sources and informants among Bengalis close to the events, to information from diplomats of other nations, and also years of experience reporting in the region itself.

From these inquiries we have found it difficult, without documentation, to accept at face value the denials of the American C.I.A. Station Chief concerning non-involvement and no prior contacts, particularly in the face of contrary statements from State Department sources. Moreover, if Philip Cherry's denials are in fact accurate, it would have represented a significant change in the traditional *modus operandi* of the Agency. While this is not impossible, it would have been unusual. As Roger Morris explained:

> It is the natural tendency of any C.I.A. station, regardless of who is sitting in Washington, regardless of the politics or the ideology of the situation,

> to respond to a coup and to keep its lines open. It was the chronic nemesis of South Vietnamese regimes for years and years that almost any plotter under any guise with any backing at all could go to the C.I.A. Station in Saigon and get something like a tacit go-ahead. The C.I.A. was very seldom in the business of crossing them or being a staunch supporter of the regime in a fluid situation like that. Now it doesn't always happen. If you've got a fairly staunch client like the Shah of Iran, then the C.I.A. acts as a bolster to the regime and they tip off the secret police or whatever. But, in any fluid situation – one sees it in Africa, one sees it in Latin America, and certainly in South Asia – a C.I.A. Station that may have had its ties out earlier to these people, that certainly would have been concerned about the instability of the regime, and might have had difficulty dealing with the regime to begin with given the past history of the United States and Bangladesh, would have instinctively said, 'Sure. Okay. We won't cut your telephone lines.'[41]

But, what has made the validity of Cherry's denials a possibility, is the fact that the Bangladesh coup occurred at the peak of Congressional hearings on covert operations and the plots to assassinate foreign leaders. Without question, these hearings in Washington were spreading an air of anxiety and cautiousness in the Dacca Embassy. According to one Embassy source, the decision of certain State Department officials to disengage and break off contact with anti-Mujib elements was due to the Church and Pike Committee hearings. As a consequence, Washington sources have raised seriously with us the possibility – while not ruling out direct C.I.A. involvement – that both senior foreign service officials and C.I.A. personnel at the Embassy could have been 'gone around' or circumvented by a higher level 'independent channel'.

This practice of 'going around' was a frequent and familiar mode of operation used by Kissinger. The House Select Committee on Intelligence reported:

> This Committee was told by former C.I.A. Director Richard Helms of a decision to undertake a covert action project in Chile. Mr. Helms had been called into the Oval Office and told by President Nixon, with Dr. Kissinger and Mr. John Mitchell present, that he was to undertake the project in spite of C.I.A. reservations. He was told 'not to inform the Forty Committee'.
>
> A pattern was emerging.
>
> Not all covert actions were generated by the C.I.A. In particular, para-military operations of the worst type seemed to come from outside the C.I.A. Some projects came from the President. Some projects came from his Assistant for National Security Affairs [Kissinger], and some had their beginning in the Department of State.[42]

The meeting in the President's Oval Office described by Helms occurred on September 15, 1970, ten days after the free election of Salvador Allende. In

Helms' notes of the meeting, later handed over to Congress, was the succinct instruction: 'no involvement of [U.S.] Embassy'. Within a month C.I.A. operatives in Santiago made contact with right-wing assets in Chile's national police force and army, presenting them with offers of cash and support for a putsch, prior to Allende's confirmation by the Chilean Congress on October 24th. On Helms' orders, money and machine-guns were passed to military conspirators who planned to kill General Rene Schneider, the high ranking military officer who was a constitutionalist and a major obstacle to a takeover by a military junta. Schneider was killed on October 22nd by a squad, later claimed by the C.I.A. to be unconnected to its own group. But Schneider's murder failed to provoke the hoped for coup and Allende was confirmed as the new President.

But this entire operation and subsequent covert measures were carried out without the knowledge of the U.S. Ambassador, Edward Korry. Prior to the confirmation of Allende, Korry had been advocating a more traditional covert method of preventing Allende's confirmation: buying votes in the Chilean Congress in favour of the election of another candidate who, at the appropriate moment, would step aside for a long-time C.I.A. associate heading the Christian Democrats. A quarter of a million dollars was approved for this operation, over and above the half-million Korry had already been authorized to spend in the period leading up to the September 1970 election. This was only a small proportion of the $8 million in covert funds (worth five times this amount on the black market) which went into C.I.A. projects, from financing newspapers to fomenting riots in the period 1970-73. Korry's option of buying the election was known as Track I. The September 15th decision in the Oval Office, to bring about an immediate military coup in order to stop the course of the electoral process in Chile altogether, was known as Track II. Significantly, Korry and Embassy foreign service officials were to be excluded from any knowledge of Track II. As Nixon put it, Korry was simply too 'soft-headed' to be relied on or trusted for a tough covert job. Buying an election is one thing; killing, another.

'So in Santiago,' according to one account, 'the C.I.A. could, as Korry put it afterwards, 'disingenuously' assure him that it had no liaison with plotters – when in fact it was handing over money and machine-guns to others certain to reach the conspirators. The C.I.A. was, Korry admitted to senators five years later, indeed an 'invisible' government; Korry sensed for a moment that autumn that 'our' C.I.A. people were 'up to something behind my back', as he described it to his foreign service deputy, who investigated and found nothing . . . . 'To an abiding contempt for Allende and the democratic system in Chile, Nixon now brought even greater fervour and matching distrust of his own government in its most secret councils.'[43]

In Bangladesh on August 15, 1975, Ambassador Eugene Boster certainly had no knowledge that the night of the 15th would be *the* night. According to Embassy sources, Boster could not be found as Mujib fell in a hail of machine-gun fire. He was not at his residence, nor at any of his normal haunts. It was a desperate night for Boster's foreign service deputies, as they frantically tried to locate the Ambassador to tell him the President was dead. Embassy sources close to Boster, interviewed two years after the coup, expressed doubts similar to Korry's about the C.I.A. Station's activities in Dacca at the time.

The possibility of 'circumvention' through a 'high-level independent channel', not only around the Embassy, but also around local C.I.A. personnel, is a question which has been put seriously to us by several Washington sources. Among them, again, has been Roger Morris:

> The games being played inside the Executive Branch are almost impossible to overestimate. At this point Kissinger would have felt no hesitation at all to unseat an already unstable regime and to replace that regime, however great the risk, with one he thought was at least no worse, perhaps better, with American clients. There was a decided distinction drawn always by Kissinger and his people between the sort of plotting and conspiracy that was involved in poisoning Fidel Castro or having Patrice Lumumba murdered on one hand, and watching what Kissinger would have called 'the tide of political change' on the other – and playing a role in it.
>
> I don't think Kissinger would have felt himself responsible for the murder of Mujib or any other politician gunned down or hanged in a coup of that kind, any more that he felt himself responsible for the round up and imprisonment of people in South Vietnam. Kissinger was shocked at allegations that he had been responsible for the murder of Allende . . . . Certainly, Kissinger could have said to himself: we're not encouraging the assassination of anybody, but if a group of dissidents come to us, promise to establish a more pro-Western American regime, and it means the replacement of a guy that has not been particularly friendly and is not a very stable force; then who are we to stand in the way? It's that kind of mentality.

Morris argues that it is not only plausible, but was a familiar occurrence for 'nods' to pro-American dissident groups to be passed through routes which circumvented authorized channels, such as the Forty Committee, State Department desks and local C.I.A. operatives. Depending on the situation, the form varied. At times the Agency was used to go around the State Department. At other times factions within the Agency itself were used to go around other factions which opposed certain Kissinger operations. As both the State Department and the Agency came in 1974-75 under close public and Congressional scrutiny, channels were utilized which went entirely around both.

> This type of operation was part of a familiar style and intra-bureaucratic tactic, again for reasons that have nothing to do directly with Bangladesh . . . . Kissinger clearly had his people and his contacts with dissident elements inside the C.I.A., not least of which was Angleton and the pro-Israeli counter-intelligence section on the Middle East. Let me give you another example entirely outside the realm. Kissinger is ostensibly

> conducting peace negotiations with the Arabs and Israelis. America's posture to the civil war in Lebanon in 1975-76 is one of hands off neutrality. But the Israeli intelligence service with the connivance of the C.I.A.'s Israeli section, not the C.I.A. entirely, only the Israeli section, is running guns and supporting all out with several million dollars the Christian side of the civil war. That is going on with Kissinger's approval and direct knowledge. It's so much at odds with the public stance of what's happening that the American Ambassador is trying to shuttle back and forth to mediate between the two sides, and is killed as he crosses the 'no man's land' one day. He is brought back to Washington and is given a state funeral at the National Cathedral and Henry Kissinger pronounces his eulogy. The ruthlessness, the realpolitik of that gambit suggest almost anything is possible. It makes what happened in Bangladesh positively tame by comparison. Because Bangladesh, whatever its notoriety, is not the Middle East in American politics.

Some sources have argued to us that 1975 was a year in which the United States held back from covert operations and involvement in coups. This was presumed by nearly the entire foreign press corps in New Delhi, when unsubstantiated innuendos and accusations were made by Indian officials and certain South Asian Communist Parties at the time of Mujib's fall. The firm view of most Western observers, then in New Delhi, was that no moment could have been more absurd for the United States to have any covert link with such an event. Each day Western reporters in Delhi read the revelations of the Washington intelligence investigations. It was obvious, to the well-informed, that any U.S. connection with the Bangladesh August 1975 coup was simply a logical and political impossibility. However, despite this rational calculation of what constituted an 'impossible moment' for such activity, a year later the truth of the Angolan operation came to light. According to Morris:

> In late 1974 and early 1975, at the height of the revelations about the C.I.A. and at the height of criticisms of American involvement, the C.I.A. with Henry Kissinger's initiative in the Forty Committee is plunging into Angola. It's only after what is exposed by Seymour Hersh's story in *The New York Times* in January 1976 that Congress acts to cut off the money. But, the guns are being run into the factions in Angola. Kissinger is proceeding all that year covertly with an intervention in a very obscure place, where the national interest is at best marginal, but one which he conceives as an important battleground with the Soviets.
>
> At the same time the Church Committee is playing with dart guns, exposing assassination attempts, talking about Chile, and compiling a very embarrassing record. These things are piling out on the front pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. The Administration is fending them off and there is great embarrassment. Colby [Director of the C.I.A.] is up on the Hill every other day. Meanwhile, Kissinger is proceeding to conduct a classic covert operation. If one is looking for any element of shame or hesitation, one will not find it in the record of the period. The Bangladesh thing is much less prominent; much more quiet; much easier to do.

Efforts to interview both Henry Kissinger and Harold Saunders on these matters in April 1979 were unsuccessful. Staff assistants to both men insisted that telephonic interviews would not be possible, and that a full written interrogatory be presented. A detailed list of questions was sent to each man covering issues related to their knowledge of the secret 1971 Calcutta negotiations, and whether select senior American officials, including themselves, had ever had prior knowledge of the coup plans which toppled the Bangladesh President, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. At the time of writing no response had been received from either man to these inquiries.

Mujibur Rahman's demise in Bangladesh marked, as did Bhutto's four years later in Pakistan,[44] the end of an entire era of hopes and illusions surrounding the prospects for social democracy in conditions of severe backwardness and underdevelopment. In both societies – Bangladesh and Pakistan – the regression to forms of military and bureaucratic dictatorship has reasserted itself like an old depressing cancer. The source of these countries' difference from India and Sri Lanka originates in the late 1950s when a weak military establishment in Pakistan was catapulted into a decade of vast growth and power by the strategic imperatives of America's global reach for military alliances. For the decade of the 1960s much of the democratic and socialist opposition, including democrats like Mujibur Rahman, found themselves in prison. Only the arrival of mass politics and mass politicization swept the military dictatorships back to the barracks. The cycle has spun around again in both societies and, although elections under military hegemony is the order of the generals, there are no illusions of a popular 'new democracy' emerging under such conditions. Whether, at least in Bangladesh, the long arm of American power and the 'security' vision of Kissinger, assisted in this reversion to past authoritarian forms is yet to be dug out down to the last detail. In the meantime, the long night of 'Martial democracy' will continue in Dacca until the history of what has happened in the past half-decade finally breaks out of obscurity into the open.

Footnotes and References

1. The principal source for this version of events was Atiqal Alam, the local Bangladesh stringer for Reuters and the BBC. Those reporters who gained access to Dacca on August 20, only to be expelled on the 22nd, were kept confined to the Hotel Intercontinental. The principal source for what became the established version of the August events was Alam's, who visited the hotel and spoke with his foreign colleagues before they were deported. Alam, after Bangladesh's War of Independence, had been arrested by Mujib's new Awami League authorities on charges of collaboration with the Pakistan Army. He had remained in Dacca throughout the nine months of the Liberation War and worked at Pakistan Radio. After his arrest he said he had been forced to work for the Pakistan authorities. Detained without trial for several months Alam

was finally released when Mujib began a policy of leniency towards collaborators and alleged collaborators. After he was freed he eventually joined the Dacca English daily, *The People*, and continued to represent the BBC and Reuters in Bangladesh. In the last year of the Mujib regime, *The People* and certain other newspapers were closed by the BAKSAL authorities. Following Mujib's death Alam became the principal source of foreign news dispatches on Bangladesh's internal developments and functioned as an important publicist to the various successor regimes in the post-Mujib period (a time in which foreign reporters were frequently barred from entering the country). In November 1975 the left-wing uprising inspired and organized by the Socialist National Party (J.S.D.) sent Alam fleeing to London. He returned to Dacca after the uprising had been crushed and those who had physically threatened him and accused him of prejudicial reporting had been arrested. These included a younger brother of Colonel Abu Taher. Alam at this stage became an open backer of the Martial Law authorities under Major-General Ziaur Rahman. This went even to the extent of offering public apologies for the regime's involvement in mass executions during 1977. In October 1977 a rebellion in the Bangladesh Armed Forces against Ziaur Rahman's Military junta resulted in the most severe political crackdown Bangladesh had witnessed since independence. *The Times* reported that at least 230 persons had died during the rebellion of 2 October. Unofficial estimates put the casualty figure mugh higher. There followed an official announcement that Special Military Tribunals had been formed to try 'traitors'. *The New York Times* reported on 20 October that Bangladesh's military government had executed 37 members of the army and that others were awaiting trial. On 27 October, *The Financial Times* reported that more than 1,000 persons, mainly servicemen, were awaiting processing by the Speical Military Tribunals. Shortly afterwards another 55 death sentences were announced. A detailed report appeared in *The Guardian* (29 November 1977): 'The exact number of people allegedly sentenced to death is not known, but most observers put the figure in the hundreds. Foreigners living near the Cantonment say they frequently hear volleys of rifle shots from firing squads in the middle of the night. Other sources claim that people are being hanged at Dacca's central gaol.' On 5 March 1978 *The Sunday Times* reported a figure of 600 persons having been executed in the aftermath of the October incidents. According to human rights organizations in Britain, these sentences represented the first officially directed mass executions ever carried out anywhere in South Asia since independence. At the end of October, Amnesty International cabled Major-General Ziaur Rahman saying Amnesty 'was gravely disturbed about large-scale executions of military men now being carried out in Bangladesh'. Amnesty called for 'an end to the executions' and the commuting of death sentences on those awaiting execution. The Amnesty statement said, 'its experience of the Bangladesh trial procedure of military tribunals trying civilians and military men without legal safeguards *in camera* gave cause for deep concern that the trial of the 92 so far sentenced to death has fallen far short of internationally accepted standards.'

It was in this context that Atiqal Alam emerged as a strong public defender of Ziaur Rahman's martial law regime. In a signed article in the Dacca weekly *Holiday*, a newspaper once known during the Mujib period as an active defender of civil liberties, prisoner rights and lawful trial procedures, Alam attacked Amnesty International for 'misplaced sympathy'. (See *Holiday*, 30 October 1977) Justifying the executions Alam asked what Bangladesh should have done, 'Let them go scot-free and strike back again with telling vehemence?' Alam also attacked the Indian Leader Jayprakash Narayan who had called for an end to military rule in Bangladesh. The BBC correspondent concluded his *Holiday* editorial with a public appeal to President Ziaur Rahman to throw 'his hat in the political ring' and establish his own political party. Shortly, thereafter, the General founded his political front known as JAGODAL, which later developed into the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

In July 1978 this writer intereviewed Atiqal Alam in London and raised with him allegations made by members of the Awami League and other Bengali political circles that he had 'planted' the story of the August 1975 coup d'etat. He said such allegations were 'completely false and utter fabrications'. He stated that he had told his confined journalist colleagues, whom he visited at the Hotel Intercontinental on the 20th and 21st of August, what had happened as best as he understood the facts at the time.

By March 1979, Alam began to sever his earlier political identification with Ziaur Rahman's military regime. In a major piece written for *The Guardian* (1 March 1979), Alam publicy alleged that the General had employed widespread rigging during the 18 February 1979 Parliamentary election. 'There are few in Bangladesh,' wrote Alam, 'who will be persuaded to agree that the BNP has won a two-thirds majority because this three-month-old party has become pre-eminently popular or that its helmsman, President Ziaur Rahman, has attained a sort of charisma which has replaced that of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the nation's founding father who was killed in a military coup in 1975.'

2. Other than Rashid, and possibly his brother-in-law Farooq, the rest of the majors recruited into the operation appear to have been ignorant of any previous links with Khondakar Mustaque. Major Rashid was the only military figure in the operation fully trusted with knowledge of earlier political liaisons; the other officers and sepoys recruited were kept in the dark about post-coup political plans. Rashid, after the coup, was reported by some sources as being Mustaque's nephew.
3. For a detailed discussion of the history and programmes of the Comilla Academy see Harry W. Blair, 'Institutional Approaches to Rural Development in Bangladesh', (reprint: Rural Development Committee, Center for International Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York).
4. 'World In Action', ITV/Granada Television, August 1976.
5. *Ibid.*
6. See Appendix C, Interview with Philip Cherry, p. 180.
7. B. Hartman and J. Boyce, 'Bangladesh: Aid To The Needy?', May 1978, Vol. IV, No. 1, (International Policy Report, Center for International Policy, Washington D.C.); 'Bangladesh Elite Said To Grab U.S. Aid',

International Herald Tribune, 20 June 1978; and 'View from a Bangladesh Village', *The Nation*, (New York), 4 March 1978.

8. Azizur Rahman Khan, 'Poverty and Inequality in Rural Bangladesh', *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia* (I.L.O., Geneva, 1977), pp. 137-47.
9. State Dept., Congressional Presentation, FY 1978, Security Assistance Program, Vol. 1.
10. 'Afghanistan After The Coup: Soviet Influence Grows', *Financial Times,* 29 August 1978; F. Halliday, 'Revolution In Afghanistan', *New Left Review,* No. 112, Nov. 1978; S. Harrison, 'After the Afghan Coup: Nightmare in Baluchistan', *Foreign Policy,* No. 32, Autumn 1978.
11. Bhashani's N.A.P. was founded in Dacca in September 1957 at a convention of 'anti-imperialist democratic forces'. In the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split, the N.A.P. itself ultimately divided – the pro-Peking tendency being known as N.A.P. (Bhashani) and the pro-Moscow tendency as N.A.P. (Muzzaffar), led by Professor Muzzafar Ahmed. See T. Maniruzzaman, 'Radical Politics and The Emergence of Bangladesh', (Bangladesh Books International, Dacca, 1975), pp. 12-13, reprinted in *Radical Politics in South Asia,* (MIT Press, 1973); editors P. Brass and M. Franda.
12. See Appendix A, The Carnegie Papers, p. 165.
13. *Ibid.*
14. For a sympathetic discussion of Chashi and his 'Rangunia Alternative', see H. Blair, *op. cit.,* pp. 32-4. For a broader view of non-socialist land reform programmes in Asia and their political context, see A.W. McCoy, 'Land Reform As Coutner-Revolution', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter-Spring 1971.
15. Address by Maxwell D. Taylor, Graduation Exercise, International Police Academy, Washington, D.C., December 17, 1965. (U.S. A.I.D. press release, same date.)
16. M. T. Klare, *Supplying Repression,* (The Field Foundation, New York, 1977) p. 19; and *War Without End* (Vintage Books, New York, 1972), Ch. 9.
17. *The New York Times,* 3 Aug. 1971; see also the testimony of D. Luce and K. Barton Osborn in *U.S. Assistance Programs in Vietnam,* and the interview with Phoenix adviser, Jeffry Smith, in 'From the Ashes, Phoenix', *Commonweal,* 20 April 1973, pp. 154-9.
18. *Congressional Record,* 1 Oct. 1973, p. S18240.
19. Jack Anderson, *The Washington Post,* 8 Oct. 1973.
20. U.S. House of Representatives, House Foreign Affairs Committee, *Foreign Assistance Request Hearings,* June 1974.
21. U.S. A.I.D. Project Implementation Order/Pakistan (O/P No. 391-113-1-00119), (obtained through Freedom of Information Act).
22. Klare, *Supplying Repression, op cit.,* p. 21.
23. R.O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944,* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1972), p. 331.
24. 'Dacca's Strongman Consolidates', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 16 Jan. 1976.
25. U.S. A.I.D., 'Participant Report: Musa Miyan Chowdhury', IPA General Course No. 30 and INPOLSE Specialization in Riot Control, June 1970, (P10/P No. 391-12710-113).

26. D. Sanford, 'Agitators in a Fertilizer Factory', *New Republic,* 11 Feb. 1967.
27. 'Murder in Dacca: Ziaur Rahman's Second Round', *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), 25 Mar. 1968; 'Bangladesh Executions', *The Washington Post,* 10 Feb. 1978.
28. Hartmann and Boyce, *op. cit.,* p. 11.
29. Interview with John Marks, author of *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence.* See also L. Stern, *The Wrong Horse,* (Times Books, New York, 1977), pp. 103-9; and House Select Ctee. on Intelligence: The Pike Papers, *The Village Voice,* (New York, Feb. 1976), p. 22.
30. 'Interim Report On Alleged Assassination Plots', Book IV, U.S. Senate Select Cte. on U.S. Intelligence Activities, Report No. 94-755, 23 April 1976, pp. 121-42.
31. *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 7-14 Jan. 1977, article by W. Shawcross.
32. Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger & American Foreign Policy* (Quartet Books, London, 1977).
33. See Appendix B, Interview with Roger Morris, p. 169.
34. Interview with Kamal Hossain, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh 1973-75, in New York, September 1978.
35. The triage theory was a crude survivalist attitude which received much attention in the western press during 1977. It was the period after the 1973 Middle East War, when world commodity markets were plunged into crisis. Simultaneously with rapid oil price rises, there were bad harvests in several parts of the globe, sending grain prices skyrocketing. This was also a period of widespread famine in Bangladesh, India and Ethiopia. Certain intellectual tendencies in the West came up with a notion linking Social Darwinism with their vision of a world based on scarce resources. The triage theory argued that the weak and poor nations would have to be 'sacrificed' and that it was the moral duty of the strong to survive. The metaphor, of course, was an overloaded life boat. When 'scarcity' gave way within a few years to overproduction and commodity surpluses, triage theories went overboard.
36. 'South Asia Swallows Its Pride', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 21 Nov. 1975.
37. 'A Crack in Mujib's Power Machine', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 15 Nov. 1974.
38. 'South Asia Swallows Its Pride', *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 21 Nov. 1975.
39. The Pike Papers, *op. cit.,* p. 9.
40. *Loc. cit.,* p. 5.
41. See Appendix B.
42. The Pike Papers, *op. cit.,* p. 9.
43. Morris, *op. cit.,* p. 236.
44. 'Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: Condemned by "Rule of Law" ', by L. Lifschultz, *New Statesman,* 16. Feb. 1979.

Appendices to Part II: A. The Carnegie Papers

In 1973, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace commissioned a major study and analysis of the conduct of U.S. Government policy during the 1971 Bangladesh crisis. The purpose of the project was to examine, in detail, the more than apparent failure of American policy in responding to the enormous human consequences of Pakistan's civil war. Under the mandate of what Carnegie terms its 'Humanitarian Studies Program', the Endowment's liberal researchers set out to examine and reveal the actual process whereby U.S. policy could virtually countenance or 'tilt' towards a situation of genocide. Drawing on previous work concerned with Biafra and the Nigerian civil war, the Endowment pressed on to an examination of the Bangladesh crisis. Carnegie researchers interviewed, often in exhaustive detail, more than a hundred senior officials from the U.S. State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Department, White House's National Security Council, Agency for International Development, Office of Public Safety, and other agencies which had any connection, even tangential, with the Bangladesh crisis. Research proceeded for a year. However, the Carnegie Endowment never issued a final report. Due to internal dissension at Carnegie, the study was never completed. From sources within the Endowment, all interviews and raw information gathered in the course of the study were made available to the present writers. The documents ran into thousands of pages. The material reveals new and fundamentally important information for historical research pertaining to the 1971 period, but also provides important insights into relationships established in this phase and earlier, that have great bearing on later developments in Bangladesh, particularly the events of 1975.

In the Unied States, the Carnegie Endowment is one of two principal established centres for foreign policy research outside official U.S. governmental organizations. The other is the Council on Foreign Relations, which publishes the quarterly *Foreign Affairs*, and has had close identification with figures such as Henry Kissinger. The Carnegie Endowment, which publishes its own major quarterly, *Foreign Policy*, was viewed during the Kissinger era as a centre critical of Nixon Administration policies, and employed, as researchers, a number of former Kissinger staff members who had quit the Administration over differences with Kissinger. When the Carter Administration took over in Washington, many of the Endowment's resident staff moved into top positions in the State Department.

In this appendix we try to unravel what the U.S. Administration was doing in South Asia in 1970-71; in doing so, we publish several excerpts, quotations and summaries of the thousands of pages of *The Carnegie Papers* on Bangladesh. We have followed a procedure of not identifying, by name, junior officials still serving in U.S. government departments against whom recriminations could one day be taken for their more honest and telling remarks.

> We were just opening up relations with China which were in a delicate position. Kissinger's trip was in July [1971], President Nixon's trip in February, and General Haig's trip [before that]. We were just beginning to talk to Chou En-Lai and other leaders. We had to demonstrate to China that we were a reliable government to deal with. We had to show China that we respect a mutual friend and opposed the crossing of international borders. So it was not so much a 'thanks Yahya for helping us with China', as demonstrating to China we were a reliable country to deal with, and that we stand by a mutual friend. That is we would even take the domestic heat to show that what we were pushing was the right thing – we'd honour our commitments. All of this was done in the recognition that India is the dominant power on the subcontinent and that we had our long-term global interests at stake.
>
> However, we saw belatedly – and I'll be the first to recognize – that we were kind of slow in recognizing *the humanitarian thing* and all the atrocities. (From *The Carnegie Papers,* Winston Lord, Kissinger's Director of Planning, National Security Council.)

> Then Sisco [Deputy Secretary of State] went around the room. The meeting included Defense people, A.I.D., C.I.A., the White House, as well as State. There were only two out of that whole group who expressed the opinion that Pakistan could survive. One, surprisingly enough, was Peter Cargo who was an old Pakistan hand. He admitted he hadn't studied the problem and was just going on memory of the Pakistan Army. He said he didn't see how any group of Bengali irregulars could defeat that Army, and I'll admit that if you've seen the Pakistan Army, it does seem pretty illogical. But it was happening. The only other one who disagreed was Hal Saunders from the White House Staff [National Security Council] who said he just didn't think any organized force could be beaten by a bunch of guerrillas. I think I immediately got on Mr. Saunders' bad list by pointing out that it had happened, or was in the process of happening, in places like Cuba and Vietnam and a number of others; and that it was especially likely to happen when, as in Vietnam, the country supplying the organized force was far away. Saunders had studied the problem and he said that the President was very friendly to Pakistan and not very friendly toward India. This struck me as the kind of thing you would have expected at the Bau Platz in Vienna. You know, 'I Like Kaiser Wilhelm, therefore, how can he lose?' I mean, to me it was apropos of nothing who the President liked or didn't like. (Senior Political Analyst, Department of State.)

The Bengali Sideshow

On the eve of the American invasion into Cambodia in 1970, Henry Kissinger remarked to his colleagues at the National Security Council, 'We're not interested in Cambodia. We're only interested in it not being used as a base.' Cambodia, as William Shawcross has termed it, was a 'sideshow' for the Americans. In this exercise on the strategic periphery, nearly 500,000 Khmers were killed or wounded in American bombing, and an estimated two and a half million peasants escaped the air war only by fleeing to Phnom Penh and other towns as refugees. Kissinger's attitude to Bangladesh a year later was little different. There was small interest in Bangladesh itself or the issues of democracy and self-determination being confronted within its society. These small nations were simply not interesting for global thinkers, except in terms of manipulation and manoeuvre within the context of the larger strategic arena. If Cambodia was a 'sideshow' for Kissinger, one can be sure Bangladesh did not even make the back lot. Nonetheless, the consequences of Kissinger's pro-Pakistan 'tilt', American supplied weapons and new shipments of ammunition, went way beyond Cambodian casualty and refugee statistics.

The two major debacles for Kissinger during Nixon's first administration were Cambodia and Bangladesh. For Americans, the developments around the Cambodian invasion are well known and well remembered: the national strikes at universities across the country, the killings at Kent State and the mass demonstrations which followed in Washington. From Kissinger's own entourage there were a spate of sudden resignations. But the internal crisis the Bangladesh events created within the Nixon Administration was much less noticed and much less reported. Nevertheless, within the ranks of the State Department, the spontaneous revolt against Kissinger's policy was genuinely unprecedented, 'Never before have we encountered that much dissent from U.S. foreign policy,' Ronald Koven, *The Washington Post's* foreign editor told Carnegie researchers. 'This had a completely unique quality in my experience. The only thing I can compare it to is the dissent against U.S. De Gaulle policy where many French diplomats were unhappy. But never before [from Administration officials] a blow-by-blow, hit-by-hit leaking like this.'

Let us review briefly, again, the essential moments of the crisis and its development. After a decade of military dictatorship, Pakistan held what was widely considered the first free and democratic elections in its history. These occurred in December 1970. The East Pakistan based Awami League won an absolute majority in the proposed National Assembly and, according to all agreed procedures, the leader of the Awami League, Mujibur Rahman, was expected to become Prime Minister of all of Pakistan. The political consequences of this result would have meant a fundamental shift in the financial domination the Western wing had exercised over the economy of the East for more than two decades. The military authorities, under pressure from irredentist elements in the Punjab and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's party, the P.P.P., refused to relinquish this dimension of the Western wing's political domination. On 1 March 1971, the country's provisional military junta, under General Yahya Khan, postponed the convening of the National Assembly scheduled for 3 March, provoking mass civil disobedience in East Pakistan. Then, on March 25, in the worst bloodshed ever seen in a single night in South Asia, the Pakistan Army cracked down on the country's democratic movement, driving Pakistan into an irrevocable civil war and Bangladesh toward complete independence.

Within the American State Department the Bangladesh developments created severe problems. Despite the mass killings in Dacca, the fact they were being carried out with American supplied CENTO/SEATO weaponry, and that all this represented the crushing of a democratic election, it nonetheless became clear to those in the State Department sensitive to the area's crisis, that the upper echelons of the Administration were inexplicably and dogmatically determined to 'tilt' towards the Pakistan junta. The liberals in the American Foreign Service, in particular those in Dacca watching the mass murder, could not take it with the expected reserve and cynicism so familiar to the diplomatic profession. In what was a rare, indeed unprecedented, act of collective dissent for the U.S. Foreign Service, 20 U.S. Consulate officials led by Archer Blood, the Consul-General in Dacca, cabled from East Pakistan their common disgust with official American policy. Provided to Carnegie researchers and dated 6 April 1971, the cable was entitled a *'Dissent From US Policy Toward East Pakistan':*

> With the conviction that U.S. policy related to recent developments in East Pakistan serves neither our moral interests, broadly defined, nor our national interests, narrowly defined, numerous officers of AmConGen Dacca, USAID Dacca and USIS Dacca consider it their duty to register strong dissent with fundamental aspects of this policy. Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pak dominated government and to lessen any deservedly negative international public relations impact against them. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy, ironically at a time when the U.S.S.R. sent President Yahya a message defending democracy, condemning the arrest of a leader of a democratically elected majority party, incidentally pro-West, and calling for an end to repressive measures and bloodshed. In our most recent policy paper for Pakistan, our interests in Pakistan were defined as primarily humanitarian, rather than strategic. But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state. Private Americans have expressed disgust. We, as professional public servants, express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected.

When the cable clattered through from Dacca at 4 a.m., a group of the State Department's South Asia area specialists gathered on the seventh floor of the Department, where the Secretary of State presides and where night traffic comes in. They all fully agreed with the Dissent and decided to add their signatures. In addition, they drafted their own letter. The group included: Howard Schaffer, Craig Baxter, Douglas Cockran, Anthony Quainton, Townsend Swayze, Andrew Kilgore, and Howles and Platten. Now numbering nearly thirty, the dissenters were listened to and then told formally and superficially how much the Department needed 'internal debate'. In the days ahead they were systematically ignored and frozen out from the making of policy.

When Kissinger two years later moved from the White House's National Security Council to take over the State Department, he began a purge against what he euphemistically termed 'clientism' in the Foreign Service. It was a campaign which took the form of counterposing 'disciplined loyalty' to 'area expertise'. In Kissinger's mind a 'clientist' was one of those Foreign Service experts who became 'too involved' with the issues, problems and people of a specific area. This type of attitude was not compatible with the principal imperatives of the Kissinger Doctrine, to which each and every regional concern had to be clearly subordinate to global strategic goals. Kissinger's view was that regional specialists should be moved out of their areas before they became too emotionally and sentimentally involved, thus inhibiting their effectiveness when certain policies decided on at higher levels were to be carried out. Those who opposed Kissinger in this view saw in his 'pragmatic objectivity' a euphemism for his own ignorant cold-bloodedness. Both the Cambodian and Bangladesh crises were the source of Kissinger's bitterness at State Department specialists who could not grasp or agree to his strategic subordination of every specific task to his global planning. At any rate he rarely revealed to anyone, as with the dramatic China reversal, what the higher strategic goals were until any prospective new deal was a *fait accompli*. It was known that experts, or the well-informed, had opposed him on Cambodia and Bangladesh. From then on he preferred loyal generalists who would implement White House policy without second thoughts. In the years ahead, many of the Bangladesh dissenters found themselves moved out of South Asia concerns, only to be rehabilitated many years later under the Carter Administration.

The Carnegie Papers reveal a dimension of tragic, if not pathetic, opera in the higher councils of American policy making. The meetings and interchanges recalled by officials seem to have reduced all the great issues of the crisis – genocide in Bengal, superpower rivalry, American policy toward dictatorship and democracy in Pakistan – down to two crude denominators: Nixon's personal hatred of India and Kissinger's obsession with China negotiations.

One State Department official recalling Nixon's visit to South Asia in 1967 put it this way:

> Back in April 1967, I had Nixon in my house for about three hours. He'd just been in a meeting with Indira Gandhi and he castigated her. He said she was no better than her father; that none of them were any better than Krishna Menon. He said he couldn't understand how I could stand Indians; how I could stand living in Calcutta or Bombay. I think the President's dislike of India was an important consideration [in the '71 crisis] . . . . There's a guy at Harvard now who has come up with the theory that there are three models for foreign policy decision making. Well, I think the fourth model is the important one: gut reaction foreign policy. What's the President's gut reaction, [i.e.] these dirty mothers have done this to us, so we'll do that to them.

Another State Department source told the Carnegie researchers:

> You've got this: we like Pakistanis, we always have. Don't ask me why. They do the right things. In the 1960s when Nixon was making his – what was it, 'three trips around the world' – the Indians never failed to do something to stick their thumb in his eye. While the Paks figured, what can it cost us to make a little fuss over him? He knows some people, has some contacts that can be useful to us, so what can it cost us? They made the investment.

What goes into the making of American foreign policy, of course, usually bears little resemblance to mystical conceptions of well informed, systematic and careful decisions being made by wise judicious policy makers who are in control of a situation and a policy. Nonetheless, while vanity and prejudice may play a part within certain constraints, they hardly explain the much deeper determinants underlying U.S. foreign policy, or the origins of American global paramountcy in the mid-twentieth century. The subjective dimension of a 'dirty mothers/gut reaction' theory of history adds merely, in our view, superb and lurid details to what are more objective and underlying processes. All such issues of deeper historical analysis, however, are beyond the scope of this report.

Nixon's personal prejudices were also recalled by Marvin Kalb, co-author of the biography *Kissinger*, and the Columbia Broadcasting System's State Department correspondent during the Bangladesh crisis. In an interview with Carnegie investigators, Kalb recalled the following incidents:

> *Carnegie:* Was it a matter of our not having any plan or action, or one of subordinating [our] Pakistan policy to larger more pressing policies?
> *Kalb:* First, I don't think they [Kissinger and Nixon] had a plan. Number two, I think they underestimated the situation in terms of its seriousness. Number three, Nixon has a psychological thing about female leaders. He just didn't like Mrs. Gandhi, and he did like military generals like Yahya Khan . . . . After four or five months of indecision, they had major breakthroughs on China. In July, Kissinger had already made his trip.

> By that time, they were interested in only one thing – to caress and coddle their relationship with China – to maintain the link.
>
> In the fall, as Mrs. Gandhi's [U.S.] visit approached, the Kissinger idea was, 'Gee, we really have to do something about this.' Partly because they were running out of time, but mostly because it could affect the triangle [U.S.A.-Pakistan-China]. These were not sentimental men, they couldn't let what has happening in Pakistan affect the alignment. I remember Nixon referred to Mrs. Gandhi as 'that bitch' ten or twelve times. The tenor of the conversation was, 'If she'd only understand what was good for her.' She misunderstood her own interests, as they saw them and that's why she was a bitch . . . . From the things that Kissinger, Rogers and Sisco told Mrs. Gandhi, she realized they were operating on two entirely different levels. I remember one reception during Mrs. Gandhi's visit. Nixon made one of his blue sky toasts and Mrs. Gandhi was very cold. The 'that bitch' references were even greater at the White House after that.

The Washington-Islamabad-Peking Rendezvous

During the spring of 1971 the overriding element of U.S. strategy into which every specific, including, if not especially, the South Asian crisis, had to fit was Kissinger's plans for a dramatic shift in Sino-American relations. On 9 July he would travel secretly in a Pakistani aircraft from Islamabad to Peking. Kissinger's own political prospects within the Nixon Administration were crucially hinged on this venture. All other questions took a subordinate position. In this period the exclusive channel between Peking and Washington were the Pakistan authorities. Few outside Nixon and Kissinger's most inner circle knew anything of the China initiative – in particular none of those concerned with South Asia policy. According to Kalb there were no more than four persons in the entire United States who had any knowledge of Kissinger's reach for China. When the secret China negotiations were later revealed, they were used within the State Department to pacify disgruntled elements who remained critical of American policy on Bangladesh. The logic used was that the China negotiations were so delicate and of such consequence to the United States, that no risks could be taken in disturbing them. A 'tilt' to Pakistan was a necessary ingredient to Kissinger's China policy. The Bengalis were a complete sideshow.

But according to another Carnegie interview with a State Department official who remained unconvinced by the *ex post facto* China justification, United States policy on China need not have compelled such an ineluctable choice:

> Of course, we were all operating within the old context during most of this – the context of who gives a damn about what China thinks . . . . I think, if I had known about the China trip, I would have suggested in the memo, 'What's wrong with Trudeau?' I mean, maybe we don't like

> him, but it must be just as easy to fly to Peking from Vancouver as from Pakistan, and probably safer . . . . We all thought that China was behaving kind of peculiarly on the thing [the Bangladesh crisis] . . . . There is the possibility that China's behavior was influenced by their desire to keep Yahya steady on Nixon's trip – just as ours was.

A senior political analyst in the State Department's South Asia Division whose job was long-term strategic planning for the region gave the following evaluation of the China relationship to Carnegie researchers.

> I think Richard Nixon is a very rational man and finds himself able to disregard humanitarian concerns. He went for the bigger prize. He thought that Pakistan was a bridge and if the U.S. failed to show support, China would be lost . . . . D.O.S. [Department of State] suggested lots of gestures that we could make to look better to the world after the crisis had been resolved, but nothing of any great importance. The White House opted for a policy that would make us look better in the eyes of Peking when it was all over . . . . I saw it from the perspective of those knowledgeable about and concerned with South Asian policy, so I know that those I worked with were of one opinion and there was very little disagreement among us. We presented clear recommendations which were disregarded . . . . I think it was strictly the sole policy of one man who was concerned with big power politics. So, therefore, recommendations that came from the D.O.S. which were based on a South Asia perspective, were largely ignored by the White House.

In remarks already cited, Winston Lord, Kissinger's deputy at the National Security Council, stressed to Carnegie investigators the internal rationalization developed within the upper echelons of the Administration. Lord told Carnegie, 'We [the U.S. leadership] had to demonstrate to China we were a reliable government to deal with. We had to show China that we respect a mutual friend [Pakistan].' How, after two decades of belligerent animosity with the People's Republic, mere support for Pakistan in its bloody civil war was supposed to demonstrate to China that the U.S. was 'a reliable government to deal with' was a mystifying position which more cynical observers of the events, both in and outside the U.S. government, consider to have been an excuse justifying the simple convenience of the Islamabad link – a link which Washington had no overriding desire to shift. On the Chinese side, Kalb suggests there was a similar sensitivity, 'When the Lin Pao incident [September 1971] happened – it could have upset the whole thing.' Describing Kissinger's attitude at the time, Kalb recalled him explaining that 'after things stabilized with China, we could go back and look at the Subcontinent.'

The Calcutta Negotiations

Carnegie: Did you know of attempts by the U.S. to mediate between West and East Pakistan or to encourage a settlement with the Awami

> League? There were statements that we had no less than eight such contacts in Calcutta.
> *D.O.S. Source:* Yes, we did contact the Awami League in Calcutta and there were individual Bengalis in positions that were acceptable to West Pakistan and were a source of hope to us. But these individuals were never effective.
> *Carnegie:* How early were these contacts?
> *D.O.S. Source:* I can't say. I won't say!
> (Senior Department of State Source)

For years among those familiar with South Asian affairs, in particular with the events of Pakistan's civil war, there have circulated vague stories and rumours of secret contacts and negotiations carried out by the Americans in 1971. However, there has never been any precise information confirming the existence and nature of these contacts. It is a topic which senior U.S. officials, familiar with and intimately involved in the history of the period, remain the most reticent on. While acknowledging the existence of some sort of contact, because Kissinger himself had obscurely but publicly stated that something was going on, the details of what actually happened and what personalities were actually involved remains, even eight years later, a strict official secret. Senior U.S. officials interviewed in 1978 continued to avoid discussion of this incident with greater strictness than any other detail of the period, saying information and documents of what happened are still highly classified.

What the Carnegie Papers make unequivocally clear beyond a doubt is that secret contacts were made with a faction of the Bangladesh Provisional Government, in the hope of splitting the independence movement and arriving at a settlement short of independence. According to a Carnegie interview with an American D.O.S. official, the contacts were first begun in June 1971, just a little over two months after the civil war had started. How they were carried out and through what channels, still remains a matter of some confusion and mystery. But it seems clear that Kissinger was operating at several levels and via different channels simultaneously, relying on those he could personally trust in the State Department, the C.I.A., the Defense Department and the N.S.C., while freezing out or giving meaningless tasks to those officials he knew or believed were against him on South Asian policy. An understanding of Kissinger's own political camps within each of these central bureaucracies, plus a sense of those who were among the trusted and those who were among the bureaucratically untrusted, is important in order to grasp how the secret negotiations were organized. The State Department after the Blood cable (from the U.S. Consul-General in Dacca) was a centre of dissidence and leaks. In New Delhi, the American Ambassador, Kenneth Keating, was adamantly against Kissinger's entire orientation in the conflict, making him a typical clientist in Kissinger's view. From his roost at the White House's National Security Council, Kissinger offered the soft choices to the State Department, broadly and vaguely issuing instructions that U.S. diplomats should explore the possibility of the U.S. acting as an intermediary between the Yahya and Mujib sides. State Department liberals had wanted a public condemnation, if not full American disassociation from West Pakistan's repression. Instead, Kissinger offered them the unrealistic task of busying themselves with finding a negotiated settlement to a deepening civil war, which itself was sliding towards an international conflict involving India. With no guidance on specifics, a number of junior D.O.S. officials began to make contacts with the Pakistani and Bengali sides in a hopeless exercise. The military authorities in Pakistan knew these were meaningless lower echelon gestures, no matter what the State Department junior officials may have thought. Pakistan's generals were dealing with Kissinger directly on an almost daily basis over the sensitive China liaison, and knew clearly that there was no American pressure on them over Bangladesh.

According to independent Washington sources and Carnegie sources, Kissinger's principal protege during the entire South Asian crisis was one of his most trusted deputies at the National Security Council, Harold Saunders. In the history of American foreign policy Saunders is a particularly obscure, but interesting figure. Following a 1956 doctoral dissertation at Yale University entitled *The Group Concept in American Sociology and Political Science 1863-1929*, Saunders joined the C.I.A. in 1959. In 1961 he was loaned by the Agency to the White House's National Security Council, where, over the next decade, he was to serve under McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow and Henry Kissinger. In 1973, when Kissinger took over the State Department, one of the few officials from the N.S.C. he shifted with him was Harold Saunders. Kissinger appointed him Director of the State Department's Intelligence and Research Division (I.N.R.). The intimacy between the two men, however, is said to have developed during the South Asian crisis. Washington sources allege that Saunders is the official who ran the secret contacts with the Mustaque faction of the Awami League in Calcutta. Relevant documents which would confirm or deny these allegations have been so far denied the authors under the Freedom of Information Act (F.O.I.A.). Saunders himself has also refused comment when contacted.

In the setting up of the contacts with Mustaque, great care was taken not to involve or inform the large number of opponents of U.S. Pakistan policy within the U.S. bureaucracies. Only the most trusted channels and contacts were used and as was characteristic of Kissinger's style, very few officials, possibly less than half a dozen, knew at the time of these sensitive contacts designed to split the Awami League on the question of independence. Washington sources have alleged that both the C.I.A. and trusted channels within the D.O.S. were used in the contacts. Relevant C.I.A. documents which would confirm or deny this allegation have so far been denied the authors under the F.O.I.A. Our sources allege that prior C.I.A. assets and contacts dating from the Pakistan period, but present already within the Mustaque camp in 1971, were the first contact points for the secret discussions.

In India, antagonistic U.S. diplomats such as Ambassador Keating were frozen out from any specific knowledge of the real character of the contacts. In Calcutta, as a reflection of the American 'neutral' tilt to Pakistan, the American Consul-General, Herbert Gordon, was instructed to maintain distance and a good measure of aloofness from the headquarters of Bangladesh's Provisional Government on Theatre Road. This was to be the formal appearance. Lower down within the Consulate, George Griffin from the political section is said by D.O.S. and Bengali sources to have taken on the job of preliminary contact work.

Griffin, a close associate of Harold Saunders, would in 1975 be taken on by Saunders as his deputy in the State Department's Intelligence and Research section, and made Chief of I.N.R.'s South Asia Division. But, in 1971, with a direct channel to Saunders and Kissinger at the White House, Griffin is said by several American and Bengali sources to have been one of the American officials involved in the link. The Carnegie Papers, in numerous discussions with American officials suggest direct C.I.A. involvement in these contacts, but this was never satisfactorily confirmed by Carnegie investigators. However, there appears that at some stage Kissinger cut out all intermediaries and dealt with the Mustaque faction directly. Whether he met their representative in Washington, Europe, or during his brief stop in New Delhi en route to Islamabad and Peking in July 1971, was never pinned down by the Carnegie study. But Carnegie investigators did learn the following from a top official in the D.O.S.'s Intelligence and Research section:

> *I.N.R./D.O.S. Source:* For a while we believed that there was a possibility of negotiating with the Awami League leaders in Calcutta. Unfortunately, later on – in October – we learned we couldn't represent all the factions. And they learned they couldn't . . . . I can't go into specifics.
> *Carnegie:* When Kissinger referred to the possibility of negotiation proving successful, was this credible considering they couldn't reach agreement on a man and considering the tensions of the period and all the other inputs you have mentioned?
> *I.N.R./D.O.S. Source:* You are asking me to comment on Kissinger . . . . He had been talking to the representatives directly. So no one knows.

George Griffin, the only D.O.S. figure directly identified with the Calcutta contacts, has been both discreet and evasive when interviewed by the authors on this issue. When first interviewed in 1978 he gave the impression he had no such knowledge of any contacts and, except for one diplomatic cocktail party in Calcutta, had had no social or political contact with representatives of the Provisional Government of Bangladesh. When re-contacted in 1979 and told that a senior official at the Calcutta Consulate had identified him as the American D.O.S. official responsible for the Calcutta liaison with certain elements in the Bengali leadership, Griffin responded, 'He ought to know. I don't think I'm at liberty to talk about that. The last time I checked that was still classified.' When the authors remarked that we could see no reason for continued classification of such 'ancient history', Griffin said, 'Well, a lot of the players are still alive.'

The contacts were highly sensitive because, as discussed already in the body of this book, they bypassed the dominant leadership of the Provisional Government, in the person of the Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed. Tajuddin, like nearly the entire rank and file of the Bangladesh movement, was irrevocably committed to full independence for the country after the massacre of the 25th March, and would breach no compromise on this issue. Therefore, absolute discretion and secrecy was the key to splitting the Bengali leadership and supporting that faction which would compromise with Pakistan and not demand full independence. Some sources have suggested that the moment chosen was to be October 1971, when Mustque, as Foreign Minister, was expected to arrive in New York to present the Bangladesh case before the U.N. General Assembly. Had he suddenly, in New York, unilaterally and without warning announced a compromise solution short of independence – a position that constituted a sell-out and a betrayal in the view of Tajuddin and the rest of the leadership – Mustaque might at that stage have pulled off a full coup against the rest of the Awami Leadership back in Calcutta, and the history of Bangladesh might have been very different. Whatever the plan, it was not to be. Mustaque's secret liaison was discovered in October and he was placed under virtual house arrest in Calcutta. He made no trip to New York.

Whatever form the contacts took and whoever the individuals involved were on the American side, it appears that Keating, the Ambassador in New Delhi, and also Gordon, the Consul-General in Calcutta, were kept in the dark about the real content of the discussions. Reporting channels via N.Ş.A. and C.I.A. communication networks, went directly to Kissinger and Saunders at the N.S.C. (White House) bypassing the Ambassador and other untrusted types. This became eminently clear in the 'Keating Cable, 1 October 1971, from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi:

> I was very interested to read byliner by I.P.S. White House correspondent Sullivan in this morning's wireless file (NESA-42) reporting 'White House officials' explanation of development of present conflict and U.S. role in seeking to avert it. While I appreciate the tactical necessity of justifying our position publicly, I feel constrained to state elements of this particular story do not coincide with my knowledge of the events of the past eight months . . . .
>
> Story indicates that both the Secretary and Dr. Kissinger informed Ambassador Jha that Washington favored autonomy for East Pakistan. I am aware of our repeated statements that we had no formula for a solution and our belief that the outcome of negotiations would probably be autonomy if not independence. But I regret I am uninformed of any specific statements favouring autonomy.
>
> Also [according] to story Jha was informed by Department on November 19 that 'Washington and Islamabad were prepared to discuss a precise timetable for establishing political autonomy for East Pakistan'.

> The only message I have on record of this conversation (State 211384) makes no reference to this critical fact.
>
> With vast and voluminous efforts of intelligence community, reporting from both Delhi and Islamabad, and my own discussions in Washington, I do not understand statement that 'Washington was not given the slightest inkling that any military operation was in any way imminent'. See for example DIAIB 219-17 of November 12 stating specifically that war is 'imminent'.
>
> I have made the foregoing comments in the full knowledge that I may not have been privy to all important facts of this tragedy. On the basis of what I do know, I do not believe those elements of the Sullivan story either add to our position or, perhaps more importantly, to our credibility.
> KEATING.

The extent to which the so-called 'need to know' sections of the State Department were frozen out by Kissinger's own personal style of pathological secrecy became pathetically obvious when the Indo-Pakistan war actually broke out in December. Without warning, almost without any rational comprehensible quality to it at all, the White House announced that the aircraft carrier, the U.S. Enterprise, with elements of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, were steaming toward the Bay of Bengal in what surely became the greatest act of impotent bluff exhibited by the United States during the entire crisis. According to a Carnegie interview with Chip Whitter, a former staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the following incident occurred on the heels of the White House announcement that the Enterprise was shipping out.

> *Carnegie:* When did you realize that policy was being made in the White House rather than the State Department?
> *Whitter:* There is one important indication that I guess I can tell you. After the Enterprise went into the Bay of Bengal, Neil [Representative Cornelius Gallagher] got a call from the State Department – [Deputy Assistant Secretary of State] Christopher Van Hollen – and apparently what he asked him was to try and find out from the Indian Embassy where the Enterprise was because the D.O.D. [Department of Defense] wouldn't tell him. Van Hollen really got screwed. He was forced to go to [Congressional] hearings and testify while the real decision-makers were left untouched.

Not only did the real decision makers remain untouched and suitably anonymous, but a number of them received rather significant promotions after the debris had cleared, and others caught holding the bag were sent packing. As already mentioned, Harold Saunders within two years of the crisis moved with Kissinger to the State Department, becoming Director of the Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau. George Griffin, the supposed White House man on the spot in Calcutta, returned after a tour of Pakistan, and was bounced upstairs to serve as Saunders' deputy for South Asia.

When the Carter Administration arrived in Washington, one of the few intimate Kissinger proteges who remained and was promoted was Saunders. Under Carter he was elevated from Chief of State Department Intelligence to the position of Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia. In 1978 he received rather wide acclaim for his role in the Camp David negotiations on the Middle East and the new attention the United States was willing to pay to the Palestinian issue. But his promotion to the status of Assistant Secretary, nevertheless, raised a few eyebrows. In the words of one of his former colleagues on the National Security Council, 'Hal has achieved what Kermit Roosevelt only dreamed of.' This refers to Roosevelt's ambition to become Assistant Secretary for N.E.A. Roosevelt had been the C.I.A. figure credited with the successful execution of the 1953 Iranian coup d'état which brought the Shah to power and toppled the nationalist government of Prime Minister Mossadeq. Roosevelt is said to have believed his achievement warranted such a position. But his C.I.A. history always stood in the way of either the Republicans or Democrats appointing him. It was always felt that top echelons of the State Department should not be stained with former or active intelligence officials. Saunders' appointment as Assistant Secretary of State ended that tradition.

When Mujib was killed in August 1975, the 1971 South Asian decision makers at the National Security Council were all now top officials of the State Department. With the departure of William Rogers in 1973, the duality of foreign policy, centred in the parallel and often rival structures of the N.S.C. and D.O.S., were fused via Kissinger's elevation to the position of Secretary of State. A year later, in the autumn of 1974, according to a high level U.S. Embassy source, the American diplomatic mission in Dacca was approached by anti-Mujib elements to ascertain the U.S. government's attitude to a possible change of regime in Bangladesh. This intelligence was forwarded back to the Secretary's office and to I.N.R. in Washington – Kissinger, Saunders and Griffin. When approached for interviews, both Kissinger and Saunders had as of the time of writing refused to comment on the question of their own 'prior knowledge' of the plan to overthrow Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – that figure whom Kissinger had, less than a year before his death, so whimsically termed a man of 'vast conception'.

B. Interview with Henry Kissinger's National Security Council Assistant

Roger Morris is former Staff Assistant to Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council (N.S.C.), and author of *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. The interview was conducted in September 1978.

Lifschultz: Outside the State Department and other official U.S. agencies, it is not at all well known how severe an *internal* crisis the events of 1971 in Bangladesh created within the American foreign policy bureaucracy. Nor is it well known how bitter an experience the Bangladesh events were for Henry Kissinger, his plans and his prospects at the time. Could you tell us what you know of this period?

Morris: In early 1975 I was interviewing for my book, a man who was then one of Kissinger's closest aides and most senior confidants. I have known him well. In utter seriousness, and not at all as a criticism of Kissinger's policy, he said there had been three nemeses of American foreign policy in the Kissinger era. These were the three 'most hated men' on Kissinger's 'foreign enemies list'. He said they were Allende, Thieu and Mujib.

It was not a matter of having allies or having enemies or adversaries, but simply these people had upset the apple cart in various ways. Allende is clear enough. Obviously he thought Thieu, as the record now shows, was an obstruction to the deal he was trying to cut with the North Vietnamese. He was always having to go back to Saigon to bomb or to do something to get Thieu to agree.

Mujib, however, I would have thought, wasn't quite in that league. Nevertheless, Kissinger did feel at the time [1971] that the events in East Pakistan were so damaging, so distracting, and so potentially disastrous for his China diplomacy on which so much else rested – including the Vietnam negotiations; and here was this unnecessary irritation – on the flank – of an obstreperous politician who was not behaving in the proper way. How an American foreign policy maker could have imagined how one politican in East Pakistan could have accounted for or complicated these separate problems shows a complete lack of understanding. Again, it reflects a curious ignorance and lack of sophistication in certain areas, as opposed to great sophistication in others. Instead of understanding that these forces were outside his control, and it wasn't a matter of thwarting Henry Kissinger or his plans for the world, there was a highly personal element in Kissinger's diplomacy and therefore an element of revenge.

Lifschultz: You seem to indicate Kissinger regarded his inability to control and direct the course of the '71 events in South Asia, as almost a personal defeat.

Morris: Kissinger certainly perceived the Bangladesh events as a personal defeat. I don't want to exaggerate the importance of Bangladesh because it wasn't a strategic defeat for American interests in the long run. It didn't create any great shift in the balance of power, but it was an extraordinary embarrassment.

Mujib's welcome-back as an exiled persecuted leader, I think, was probably the most embarrassing single event in American foreign policy since Castro rode into Havana on a tank. If you look at the record of American intervention around the world, to keep various politicians from assuming power, either covert or overt intervention, and if you look at events in the world prior to the fall of South Vietnam, Washington is by and large successful by hook or by crook. There are really no obstreperous regimes around. The Makarios regime in Cyprus comes to power by compromise, almost as an American creation ironically enough, although he is regarded as a Castro-like figure. Allende comes to power, for sure, in a free election which the Americans try to buy off with a lot of covert intervention. But it is not the national or international scandal at the time. It happens almost quietly. And it's because it happens so quietly that the American intervention proceeds after he takes power. But, Mujib comes to power as a defiance, as a real defeat for America and America's client; and as a great embarrassment for the Administration.

One thinks of Henry Kissinger as being a traditional 19th century diplomat. His mentors, models and heroes are all 19th century. One would then think the adage would be, 'No permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests.' This would have dictated that the United States immediately welcome Mujib and embrace the regime; to try to keep it within the camp. But, there was, as I have said, Kissinger's vindictive streak. It ran through it, in the sense, he [Mujib] is not our man. And, if he is not our man, there is no such thing as permanent interests. Now it is a matter of getting our people in and their people out.

Kissinger is really Bismarckian in the sense that the world is essentially conducted by heroes and non-heroes or anti-heroes. Personalities matter enormously. He undoubtedly did see Mujib and Allende and Thieu and Makarios, and others who gave him problems, as being there on the stage to give Henry Kissinger a bad time. He took the Bangladesh events as a personal defeat.

It certainly was perceived as a major political setback for the Administration. It spoiled things badly for a while . . . . The sense of paranoia, the sense of being able to run the world at home and abroad, the sense of irritation, betrayal and venom toward people who get in the way, is all of a piece at this time. It's an era, as we know from the Watergate investigation, when lasting animosities are formed by the Administration and accounts are taken for later reckoning. Their attitude towards the world, towards Allende, towards Mujib, towards Thieu, towards Makarios, towards anyone who got in their way in effect, was very much a vindictive one. Very much a matter of you're going to get your come-uppance.

For the most part, the only stain on the record up to this time [prior to 1974], with the exception of the anti-war opposition, has been South Asia. It is the only place the Administration has been under public fire in the Congress or in the press. It is the only place where Kissinger's diplomacy is seen to be ineffectual and where no magic could be made to work. It is the only place where American interests have been reversed and where there is an obvious Soviet inroad, and obvious Soviet advantage. There isn't this perception yet about Chile. Chile was always much murkier. After all, when Allende is 'disposed of' and a 'nice responsible Junta' comes to power, people stop worrying about that. The Cyprus crisis then breaks out in 1974 and sort of drags along. There is a public perception of disaster there, but again the Turks seize the land and there is not the same perception of Soviet gains, not the same Cold War balancing that went on in South Asia, and there isn't quite the hostility to American interests that is perceived in Bangladesh. And in a sense the Bangladesh crisis is used as the last major challenge Kissinger's rivals within the White House mounted against him. After that, Watergate overtakes them all.

Lifschultz: Moving forward in time I would like to hear your perception of the events of 1974 and 1975. The year '74 was a year of great deterioration for the Mujib regime. Within the country large political demonstrations had already begun to develop against the regime, and intensified as famine overwhelmed the north of the country. Having been the hero of the nationalist movement in 1971, Mujib in 1974-75 had become something of a national scapegoat, a figure now hated, born out of bitterness and disillusionment.

Now we have been told that the group the U.S. had secretly been in contact with in '71, during the secret Calcutta negotiations, allegedly approached the Americans in the autumn of 1974 to determine what the U.S. attitude would be to a possible coup d'état, if it could be pulled off. Given what you know of the background of the relations of the two countries and Kissinger's attitude to Mujib, as you have stated it, is it at all conceivable to you that Kissinger could have given a 'nod' or any indication that the U.S. would approve of such a change?

Morris: Oh, yes. It is absolutely plausible for two reasons. First, because at this point Kissinger would have felt no hesitation at all to unseat an already unstable regime. Secondly, because it is the natural tendency of any C.I.A. station, regardless of who is sitting in Washington, regardless of the politics or the ideology of the situation, to respond to a coup and to keep its lines open. It was the chronic nemesis of South Vietnamese regimes for years and years, that almost any plotter, under any guise, with any backing at all, could go to the C.I.A. Station in Saigon and get something like a tacit go-ahead. The C.I.A. was very seldom in the business of crossing them, or being a staunch supporter of the regime, in a fluid situation like that. Now it doesn't always happen. If you've got a fairly staunch client like the Shah of Iran, then the C.I.A. acts as a bolster to the regime and they tip off the secret police or whatever. But, in any fluid situation – one sees it in Africa, one sees it in Latin America, and certainly in South Asia – a C.I.A. Station that may have had its ties out earlier to these people, that certainly would have been concerned about the instability of the regime and might have had difficulty dealing with the regime to begin with, given the past history of the United States and Bangladesh, would have instinctively said, 'Sure. Okay. We won't cut your telephone lines.'

Lifschultz: But this is now in 1975, at the height of the Church Committee hearings on the assassinations of foreign leaders. In these circumstances would not Kissinger hesitate to give such a 'nod?'

Morris: The games being played inside the Executive Branch are almost impossible to overestimate. At this point Kissinger would have felt no hesitation at all to unseat an already unstable regime and to replace that regime, however great the risk, with one he thought was at least no worse, perhaps better, with American clients. There was a decided distinction, drawn always by Kissinger and his people, between the sort of plotting and conspiracy that was involved in poisoning Fidel Castro or having Patrice Lumumba murdered on one hand, and watching what Kissinger would have called 'the tide of political change' on the other – and playing a role in it.

I don't think Kissinger would have felt himself responsible for the murder of Mujib or any other politician gunned down or hanged in a coup of that kind any more than he felt himself responsible for the round up and imprisonment of people in South Vietnam. Kissinger was shocked at allegations that he had been responsible for the murder of Allende . . . . Certainly, Kissinger could have said to himself we're not encouraging the assassination of anybody, but if a group of dissidents come to us, promise to establish a more pro-Western American regime, and it means the replacement of a guy that has not been particularly friendly and is not a very stable force; then who are we to stand in the way. It's that kind of mentality.

Lifschultz: It has been argued to us by several sources that a 'nod' passed to a dissident faction looking for American aid and support in the period following the coup, could have been given through an independent channel, which may have circumvented both local C.I.A. and Department of State (D.O.S.) officials who were nervous about the Church Committee hearings and the possible criminal charges against Helms and others. With local Embassy personnel being highly cautious about the appearance of any 'nod', with certain D.O.S. officers attempting to break off liaison, might Kissinger have operated through another channel? Was it his style of operation to go around both the State Department and the C.I.A.? In '71 he allegedly went completely around the State Department via Saunders at N.S.C. [National Security Council] and it appears through the C.I.A. in Calcutta and Delhi. Was it like him to go completely around the Department and the Agency acting through a direct channel in such a situation?

Morris: It is absolutely plausible and, again, independent of events directly connected to Bangladesh. We know from Colby's memoirs [a former Director of the C.I.A.] and from the events of that period, that there was a conflict between the White House on one hand and those in the C.I.A. who felt there was a public reckoning coming and felt they ought to own up and clean house. Kissinger was certainly opposed to Colby going up on Capitol Hill and spilling his guts. There's this great quote from Colby saying Kissinger stopped him one day and said, 'You know, Bill, you're just like a Catholic going to confession when you go up the Hill. That's no good.'

This type of operation was part of a familiar style and intra-bureaucratic tactic, again for reasons that have nothing to do directly with Bangladesh . . . . Kissinger clearly had his people and his contacts with dissident elements inside the C.I.A., not least of which was Angleton and the pro-Israeli counterintelligence section on the Middle East. Let me give you another example, entirely outside the realm. Kissinger is ostensibly conducting peace negotiations with the Arabs and Israelis. America's posture to the civil war in Lebanon in 1975-76 is one of hands-off neutrality. But, the Israeli intelligence service, with the connivance of the C.I.A.'s Israeli section, not the C.I.A. entirely, only the Israeli section, is running guns and supporting all out with several million dollars, the Christian side of the civil war. That is going on with Kissinger's approval and direct knowledge. It's at odds so much with the public stance of what's happening, that the American Ambassador is trying to shuttle back and forth to mediate between the two sides, and is killed as he crosses the 'no man's land' one day. He is brought back to Washington and is given a state funeral at the National Cathedral and Henry Kissinger pronounces his eulogy. The ruthlessness, the realpolitik of that gambit suggest almost anything is possible. It makes what happened in Bangladesh positively tame by comparison. Because Bangladesh, whatever its notoriety, is not the Middle East in American politics.

The other factor to take into account here is that in late 1974 and early 1975, at the height of the revelations about the C.I.A. and at the height of criticisms of American involvement, the C.I.A., with Henry Kissinger's initiative in the Forty Committee, is plunging into Angola. It's only after what is exposed by Seymour Hersh's story in *The New York Times* in January 1976, that Congress acts to cut off the money. But the guns are being run into the factions in Angola. Kissinger is proceeding all that year, covertly, with an intervention in a very obscure place, where the national interest is at best marginal, but one which he conceives as an important battleground with the Soviets.

At the same time the Church Committee is playing with dart guns, exposing assassination attempts, talking about Chile, and compiling a very embarrassing record. These things are piling out of the front pages of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post.* The Administration is fending them off and there is great embarrassment. Colby is up on the Hill every other day. Meanwhile, Kissinger is proceeding to conduct a classic covert operation. If one is looking for any elements of shame or hesitation, one will not find it in the record of the period. The Bangladesh thing is much less prominent; much more quiet; much easier to do.

Let me add one more comment in this context. If you look at events from the spring of '73, Kissinger is increasingly operating without the kind of *ad referendum* arrangement he always had with Nixon. And, God knows, he was probably the single most powerful official of the 20th century. I can't imagine anybody before him – even Dean Acheson, who had a good deal of authority and autonomy under Truman – negotiating with the free-wheeling authority Kissinger had when Nixon was at the peak of his power after the re-election. But even during that period, Kissinger is also obliged to cable back to Washington and he's damn careful, he's still being challenged by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, and it is not at all certain at the end of 1972, the beginning of 1973, that Kissinger will necessarily stay on in the second administration. It is hard to imagine that now, but if one looks back at that time one remembers a lot of talk about John Connolly becoming Secretary of State, and Kissinger saying to his friends in the press that if that happens 'I'll go'. When Kissinger is appointed Secretary of State in late 1973, it is after the period when the Administration has already begun to decline. The first exposé of Watergate had come out and Kissinger is in effect a kind of legitimizing factor for the regime. He emerges very quickly during 1973 as the principal advisor and, foreign policy being the only redeeming factor the regime has had throughout its life, Kissinger becomes the focus of all things. Practically speaking, once Nixon goes, even in the months before the resignation, Kissinger becomes the *de facto* President for foreign policy. There is no one above him and no one he need consult.

Lifschultz: Throughout this period, Kissinger's principal aide on South Asian affairs, both in 1971 and 1975, and the man who is said to have handled the Mustaque negotiations in 1971, was Harold Saunders. [Saunders was Kissinger's aide on the N.S.C. for Near East and South Asia, and later moved with Kissinger to the State Department as Director of Intelligence and Research. Under the Carter Administration Saunders was promoted to Assistant Secretary of State for N.E.A. (Near East and Asia) under Cyrus Vance.] It is not generally well known about his C.I.A. history, but I've heard it said that Saunders has achieved what Kermit Roosevelt only dreamed to achieve. [Roosevelt was the C.I.A.'s Chief of Station in Tehran during the coup d'état which removed Prime Minister Mossedeq and put the Shah of Iran into power.] During the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, even into the Johnson Administration, it was considered indiscreet and ill-considered to put C.I.A. officials into top State Department posts. What can you say about Saunders and his role in the history of these events?

Morris: Saunders has built his career by two devices. One, by being the perfect and loyal and ever diligent staff man. He's totally without apparent guile and totally without politics. By that, I mean, if the bureaucrat and the civil servant is conceived as someone who carries out orders regardless of the regime, regardless of ideology, and represents the permanent consensus core of American policy, then Saunders is it. People like Saunders, and in Saunders' case specifically, are the explanation as to why American foreign policy doesn't change with elections. You can impeach a President and elect someone who is pledged to change things, but the Saunders somehow survive. Saunders is now a veteran of five administrations. It is quite a record.

The other device is he is not perceived as a C.I.A. operative. He is after all absent from the C.I.A. in the sense of being absent from the building and from the direct payroll since the early 1960s. So he's almost purged of his taint. He's not perceived as an operator or an institutional representative. He is perceived of as a kind of permanent civil servant in other institutions. He's a C.I.A. 'loan' to the N.S.C., then he becomes the N.S.C. man, and he becomes the Department of State man. His relations are all very cordial and all very good. He got this job because he had so impressed the people around Vance now, who had previously worked for Kissinger and Rogers or Rostow. That is, Richard Holbrooke, Tony Lake, William Bains, Donald McHenry and Ben Reed. Saunders is one of these people who survive political changes in Administrations because 'they' know, they being the 'in and outers' of the Democrats or the Republicans, that Saunders will be as loyal, discreet, and as useful to them as he was to the previous Administration.

It is very interesting. The paradox is that probably few officials have been so directly responsible for a given line of American policy, because his opposition or shading of intelligence or his presentation of staff memos could have changed things directly and, at the same time, so absolved of that responsibility by those who come and go inside the government. He is not conceived of as being a policy maker, yet he has obviously, in direct ways, made policy for a very long time indeed. In part, it is the arrogance of the upper echelon who think they are making policy on the basis of what their underlings tell them. And in part, it is the ignorance of the public and the Congress who never have quite understood what the hell bureaucrats are about and how important they can become. It is chronic in the American political system because we have a way of understanding all of that in domestic politics. We somehow know that a H.E.W. [Health, Education and Welfare] bureaucrat, an Agricultural bureaucrat, a Commerce or Labour bureaucrat, can, over time, have tremendous influence on programmes which reach out into the economy or race relations. But in Foreign Policy we've never quite understood the impact of bureaucracy or how people like Saunders operate. Saunders is a very rare breed. He is not a Foreign Service Officer in any sense. He's never served abroad in his life. He came to the [Central Intelligence] Agency, served his apprenticeship and then was picked up by Robert Komer as a bright young staffer for the National Security Council, as a writer of memos and a researcher. By sheer longevity and by sheer blandness of manner, if not of policy, he survived. One survived at the N.S.C. in Rostow's era by indulging Rostow's madnesses and whims, and by being solid and chatty as a staff man. One survived in the Kissinger era by being fecklessly loyal to Kissinger and by never making waves and by doing what you were told. Saunders obviously did. One survives in Cyrus Vance's State Department by doing half what the bureaucrats want and half what Vance orders from the top, and since those things are nearly always the same, there's no problem. Saunders is not an evil man. He is not a particularly forceful person. He is by no means a theorist. But by this time he has developed a core of prejudices and preconceptions. He is infinitely discreet. He is faceless and voiceless as a bureaucrat.

Harold Saunders is what's wrong with American foreign policy. It would be so easy to purge the bureaucracy and to give it its necessary yank or jerk, if one could find patently evil misguided men. But policy, as it is in Great Britain or in any of the large industrial states, is no longer run by such people. It is run by relatively bland, faceless and 'decent' sorts, who you can have tea or coffee with without any problem, and who never really discuss substance; who operate at a certain mushy middle level of 'options'; and who, if called upon, can do very ruthless and savage things. Jesus, the guys who ordered the bombing in Vietnam and the bureaucrats in the Pentagon who toted up the body counts were not green-eyed monsters who went home at night to beat their wives and kids. They were relatively Saunders-like bureaucrats.

B. Interview with the C.I.A. Bangladesh Station Chief, September 1978

This interview with Philip Cherry, C.I.A. Station Chief in Bangladesh 1974-76, was conducted by Lawrence Lifschultz when he spoke on 26 September 1978 by telephone from New York with Cherry in Lagos, Nigeria. What follows is the transcript:

Lifschultz: The reason I'm calling is that for some time now, I and another colleague have been working on a story relating to Bangladesh and the events there in 1975. Your name has come up in this story through people we have been talking to in the State Department. In the near future we will be going to press with an article and we wanted to speak with you and afford you every opportunity to present your viewpoint on the events, and whether the statements made about your involvement are inaccurate or accurate. I would like to ask some questions over the telephone. And to see if we can discuss some of these issues. People at the State Department, discussing with us events of what happened in August '75, have raised the point that representatives of a group intending to overthrow the Mujib government had approached the Embassy in the autumn of 1974 and we are curious to know what you knew of these meetings. Or whether you participated in them at all.

*Cherry:*No, I did not. I didn't get there until September 1974. I was a political officer then. We had no Bangladeshi come into the office and tell us anything about any plans for coups or anything like that. We had all kinds of Bangladeshis coming into the office, but not for that reason. If anyone like that had come in, I have heard from my colleagues who were there before, they would have been listened to but told to go away. You know the information would have been interesting, but [we would have been] unable to substantiate, and that would be the end of it.

Lifschultz: State Department sources told us that, while discussions were held in the autumn of '74 with representatives of a group that wanted to know the U.S. attitude to a possible change [in Dacca], that as far as the State Department people knew they had disengaged from this group as of late 1974/early 1975. The way your name has come up is that the State Department source has alleged to us that the C.I.A. Station maintained liaison with the group down to the day Mujib was overthrown on the 15th [August]. Would you have any comment on that?

Cherry: Well, not to my knowledge. I don't think so. Who were you talking to in the State Department?

Lifschultz: I wish I could tell you specifically. But our sources have asked their names not to be used. They have said those allegedly involved in these contacts were people such as Mahub Alam Chashi, Taheruddin Thakur, A.B.S. Safdar. People such as these. Do you know any of these people? Have you ever met any of these people while you were in Bangladesh?

Cherry: I know some of those names, but I've never met any of those people you've named.

Lifschultz: What then is your understanding of how the August coup actually occurred?

Cherry: Oh, it's an interesting story and we certainly tried to find out an awful lot about that after the coup occurred, but we had no indication it was occurring. Or we had no information at all, as far as I know at the Embassy, that a coup was about to occur. We had no advance warning of it whatsoever. There was some confusion in that. I remember the rumours after the event. Our communications there is so good that we were able to get the information of the coup back to the United States very very early. The fact a coup was going on was quite apparent. There was a lot of shooting going on. One of our political officers lived right across the street from where one of the families was killed. Lot of firing. All of us who had any substantive role at the Embassy, went directly to the Embassy. This was about four or five in the morning. We sent our messages in that the coup was occurring. You could hear the guns. We didn't know what was going on. Well, the messages got back because of the time zone change, it got back in time to be released by the Department for the evening news. And this is what incited an awful lot of people there to conclude that the American Embassy knew about it in advance. I for one can tell you we did not.

Lifschultz: So, as [C.I.A.] Station Chief in Dacca, you had absolutely no prior knowledge of the coup which was about to occur.

Cherry: As a political officer in Dacca, I had no prior knowledge that a coup was about to occur. That's right.

Lifschultz: So you would deny these allegations to us, that members of the Dacca Station of the Agency had maintained direct liaison with persons such as Chashi, Safdar and others who were directly linked to the Mustaque conspiracy to overthrow Mujib?

Cherry: As a political officer there, I had absolutely no information in that regard. And as an individual there, I don't know those people. I know of them by name, but I had not met them. I never met any of them.

Lifschultz: We have some difficulty with this status of political officer. People in the State Department have directly told us you were the Station Chief at the time.

Cherry: Well, I don't know why they said that.

Lifschultz: Is that untrue?

Cherry: Pardon?

Lifschultz: Is that incorrect information?

Cherry: Well, as anybody can see from my file and the biographic registry, I'm a political officer. And have been in Dacca.
Lifschultz: You were not the C.I.A. Station Chief in Dacca at the time?
Cherry: Well, I don't know where you got that allegation.

* * *

Lifschultz: Sources which we consider high level have come to us with a story of your involvement in the coup against Mujib . . .
Cherry: That's ridiculous.
Lifshultz: We'd like to have your statement on that and a full denial. If necessary . . .
Cherry: I can give you a full denial that I or anybody I knew at the Embassy in Dacca had anything to do with the coup that overthrew Mujib. We had excellent relations with his government. It was not up to us to decide how that government was to be changed, and we were not involved in any coup attempt. And I can say that for certain.
Lifschultz: State Department officials and other sources have informed us of contacts with the Mustaque group going back to 1971 in Calcutta, where secret negotiations were conducted by Secretary of State Kissinger on a possible separate peace in the Bangladesh/Pakistan war. Now it is our understanding that these contacts were renewed in the fall of '74 with the same individuals the U.S. had been in contact with in '71. And it has been alleged they approached the Embassy for a sense of the U.S. attitude if a political change occurred.
Cherry: Absolutely false. Absolutely false. Have you spoken to Ambassador Boster who was there at the time?
Lifschultz: We have spoken to nearly every political officer and member of the Embassy we've been able to reach.
Cherry: If you spoke to Ambassador Boster or anybody else, I'm sure they've told you the same thing I have – that all of that is absolutely false. I served in New Delhi at the time of the Indo/Pak war. There was nothing to do with Mustaque in Calcutta. I've never met Mustaque. Of course, I know of him. There was none of this.
Lifschultz: As far as your understanding as a 'political officer' there, did the coup against Mujib occur simply by six majors pulling up to his house with the troops under their command and killing him? What is your understanding of any prior political involvement of Mustaque or his group? Do you have any understanding of that?
*Cherry:*Well, to the best of my knowledge of what I found afterwards, when they came into power, that I think this was purely a military move by a group of young majors, who then selected or perhaps they did have some prior arrangement with Mustaque, this we weren't able to ascertain exactly. But most of this was pretty much in the press at the time. And that was basically accurate. But there was absolutely no U.S. involvement. My God, what would the U.S. Government possible get out of attempting to be involved in a country

like that? A country with such major problems.

Lifschultz: Mr. Cherry, in my own reporting when Mrs. Gandhi and the pro-Soviet parties were making these allegations, I dismissed them completely, and reported them as nonsense.

Cherry: I've always had great respect for your stories.

Lifschultz: Well, thank you. But now, in the midst of new information with people approaching me with various documentation, I've been forced to re-examine a version of a story I took, as six majors pulling up to Mujib's house and, out of their own personal grudges and resentments, deciding to do away with him.

Cherry: Yes, well, as far as I know, with any coup there is prior planning . . .

Lifschultz: And what we're trying to look into is the prior link-up with the Mustaque network and circle within the Awami League. Furthermore, there are curious antecedents with the contacts in 1971 which you say you know nothing about, but which we have documentation of. Mustaque was dismissed as Acting Foreign Minister by Tajuddin. He was dismissed for engaging in the eight secret contacts. We have been able to confirm this definitively.

Cherry: On that very point. There is one thing, there are politicians which frequently approach Embassies and perhaps have contacts there. They think they may have contacts. But that's a far cry from any of those Embassies involved in assisting them in involvement in a coup. A political officer's job is to assist his government by providing information on what is going on and a good political officer has many contacts. But that does not mean he is advising these politicians or coup leaders to overthrow governments. That's where it goes off.

Lifschultz: What we are trying to determine is if the U.S. had prior knowledge and whether this prior knowledge constituted a sense in any way which may have given people connected to the Mustaque group a sense of an American nod, that if they went ahead the U.S. would have no objection.

Cherry: Absolutely not. Absolutely not in Bangladesh in 1975 or 1974. Or any time that I know of. There were several coups there as you know. At no time did the U.S. government have prior knowledge that any of them would take place. We did not know when any of the coups were about to take place. Let me also say, throughout those months and years, there were all kinds of coup rumours going on at all times. And there were many times when political officers there, all of us at the Embassy, would be writing reports based upon the reports they were picking up, and these were from a variety of people. But at no time to my knowledge did Mustaque or anybody under his command come to the Embassy and tell us anything.

Lifschultz: We have heard allegations about persons such as A.B.S. Safdar who took over direction of the National Security Intelligence . . . [*Cherry:* Right] . . . Allegations have been made that he attended various schools which were C.I.A.-backed in the United States, and that he had been a direct informant to the United States of much of what was about to happen in August 1975. Do you have any knowledge of such an allegation?

Cherry: I have never heard of that allegation. I know it's false. Safdar was a member of one of the Sports Clubs, I think he was president of it, and I met him when I joined. But Safdar never passed any information to the U.S. Government to my knowledge. If he did, maybe it was before I got there. But I have no idea.

Lifschultz: Did you know anything of another man who attended the International Police Academy in 1971 with Safdar named Abdur Rahim?

Cherry: I don't know the man. I've never heard of his name.

Lifschultz: I want you to understand that as a journalist I have been approached with a new version of a story I was very much interested in at the time . . . [*Cherry:* Well, we both are.] . . . And I'm interested in getting to an accurate view of what happened. This is a version of events alleging U.S. involvement, that I completely dismissed as propaganda on Mrs. Gandhi's part and on the part of the Communist Parties of India and Bangladesh . . .

Cherry: That's right. And my name has been linked to it in the communist press, *Blitz* and some of the Calcutta papers, I understand. And it is absolutely ridiculous. To begin with, why should we? We were pouring aid into Bangladesh under Mujib.

Lifschultz: It is a question I have asked myself a good deal. Again our source indicates, as you know and as I know, that Mujib at the end of '74 and through '75 was in deep political trouble . . . [*Cherry:* True] . . . The whole political situation was deteriorating . . . [*Cherry:*It certainly was] . . . It was clear something was going to happen . . . [*Cherry:* Yes, of course] . . . Whether it was going to be from the Left or from the Right was up in the air. Our sources allege the Mustaque circle decided to move and that to do so they felt the need for U.S. support in the period afterwards. And that was what went into their decision to organize their operation. Now that is what I am checking out. In terms of the motivation of what the hell we would be involved in, this was that there was going to be an imminent change in a highly unstable area of South Asia and that the U.S. was interested in non-communist stability.

Cherry: Yes, look, we had long discussions about this very thing at the time. And we knew that this was a possibility. We knew that Mujib was in trouble. We also knew that no matter what happened there, no matter who overthrew Mujib, or what overthrew Mujib, we also knew we would be blamed for it. That the American Embassy would be blamed for it. Because Mujib had Mrs. Gandhi's backing and a lot of Soviet influence there as well. That no matter what happened [we would be blamed]. So we were extra extra careful to be super clean. To make sure all of us were directed by Ambassador Boster. To cut any contact which would possibly give credence to the theory we knew was going to come about. We indeed followed Ambassador Boster's instructions.

Lifschultz: So why does a high level Embassy official tell me there were meetings over a four or five months period, with groups inquiring into the U.S. attitude, and that the Embassy decided in December/January to disengage from these people at the height of the Church Committee hearings in Washington? Why does a high level Embassy person tell me that?

Cherry: I don't know why. [*Lifschultz*: And then allege that you and the Station maintained contact with these people down to the day of the coup.] . . . Well, that's absolutely false. I don't know why. There may be somebody who has a grudge against somebody there, and is now making these statements. But I wish I would have the opportunity to confront him and discuss this with him in your presence.

Lifschultz: What we want to do is pose your denials against his statements. We are writing this story to be as truthful and accurate as the facts we can get. We do not want to make any false allegations. We know people have careers and lives to live. And we have no desire to drag people into something that is not true or accurate.

Cherry: Yes, that's right. I appreciate that because from your writing I have followed – I don't get it anymore unfortunately, being here in Lagos – I read your articles with great interest. And I always found them to be as you state. But in this one, if you believe that individual over others, and I'm sure you've been talking to more people than myself, I hope you come up with a balanced article.

Lifschultz: Let me ask you this. Could any of these things have happened without your knowledge? Could there have been people on your staff in contact . . .

Cherry: There was nobody on my staff in the political section who had any of this. It would not be done without my knowledge.

Lifschultz: The reason I'm saying that is some of us have been much interested in the work done by Larry Stern on events which occurred in Athens in 1967. Stern has just finished this book called *The Wrong Horse* for the Carnegie. In that instance certain developments occurred without the knowledge of the Station Chief or the political section's knowledge of certain other members of their staff. And there were links with the Papadopolous group that were without the knowledge of the Station Chief, with certain people operating autonomously. None of that, to your knowledge, occurred in the Bangladesh situation? And as far as you knew people on your staff were completely under control?

Cherry: To my knowledge there wasn't anything that went on in that Embassy that Ambassador Boster and any other responsible individuals there didn't have full knowledge of. [exchange of telephone numbers . . .] Now this article that you're writing, you are writing it for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*?

Lifschultz: We are not sure yet where we are going to publish it. We are discussing with several editors. Frankly, it's about what happened in 1975 . . .

Cherry: Are you writing it yourself?

Lifschultz: I am writing it with Mr. Bird [Assistant Editor, *The Nation*, New York] who has been doing a lot of interviewing and digging in Washington over the last six to eight months.

Cherry: Some of the things that you've mentioned, I know are way off.

Lifschultz: Okay, I want accuracy. I am not trying to grind any axes here.

Cherry: Well, what you're gonna do? . . . there was no U.S. government involvement, or any other government involvement that I know of, in any of the coups that occurred there . . . [*Lifschultz*: We stayed completely out of it?] . . . That's right. We stayed out of every one of them. Completely out of it. People there [if they] did things, they did them completely on their own. What you'll do, if you write an article or a book or whatever and you make that allegation and back it up, it's going to distort whatever else you did. Because it's a great story; it's interesting and I know it fairly well, but . . . [*Lifschultz*: What's a great story?] . . . once you put in the other, you lose the rest of it . . . . [*Lifschultz*: What's a great story?] . . . The history of what went on there. In those years, in '75, in Bangladesh. It's interesting, but it has nothing to do with any U.S. government or any government's involvement. The Bangladeshis were doing it to themselves. It's a great canard to think any coup takes place because of any government involvement. Almost always, coups take place because of the people themselves.

Lifschultz: Mr. Cherry, as you know and as I know, certain critical coups have occurred with U.S. backing. Need I name Allende? Need I name a number of other people . . . Diem . . .

Cherry: That may have happened years ago, but boy that's long since over. Many years ago.

Lifschultz: What struck me as ridiculous in the '75 instance, is how could we possibly be involved at the height of the Church Committee hearings on those kinds of issues, ever be expected to be involved in such a thing. [*Cherry*: Exactly. Absolutely correct. And the answer is that we weren't] . . . That's what I'm trying to find out. [*Cherry*: I've been telling you that.] . . . When top State Department people come to us with opposite information, we must check it out.

Cherry: Fair enough.

Lifschultz: I would like to know what the prior political planning Mustaque was involved with . . . . going back to even 1971.

Cherry: As I say, there's one thing: he may have thought he had contacts, but as far as any type of machinations going on there, I doubt it very much.

Lifschultz: Why was he dismissed as Foreign Minister as far as you remember?

Cherry: I don't remember the details of that. I just don't.

Lifschultz: It is an 'amazing' coincidence that the three men who made up the Mustaque Triangle in Calcutta show up the morning Mujib is killed, at the Dacca Radio Station – Chashi, Thakur and Mustaque – and we have very solid information about prior meetings at Comilla and other places in the months beforehand, planning and meeting with people on what they intended on the 15th.

Cherry: They may have done so, but to my knowledge they never met with any American Embassy officials. As far as I know.

Lifschultz: Or any go-between?

Cherry: Not to my knowledge. No.

Lifschultz: Okay. We'll be back in touch if we need to. You call us if you have any additional thoughts you want to add. I've been taking stenographic notes as we've been talking on your denials which, if we go ahead with this article, we want to print. Okay?

Cherry: It would be nice to have me double-check them before you do print.

Lifschultz: Okay. We will and will call you back and check the quotes with you. Or if you yourself would like to write a statement, please do that.

Cherry: I have no wish to do so.

Lifschultz: Well, all right. And thank you.

Cherry: Good-bye.

D. The East Pakistan (Bangladesh) Security Services and the American Office of Public Safety

From the early 1950s until late 1973, the C.I.A. operated a proprietary, International Police Service (I.P.S.), in the Washington D.C. area. It had the dual purpose of improving allies' internal security, and evaluating foreign cadets for pro-U.S. orientation, which might later enable C.I.A. to recruit them as intelligence assets. In the early 1960s the Agency for International Development's Office of Public Safety (A.I.D.-O.P.S.) became actively involved in foreign police training . . . . C.I.A. documents indicate that, with the co-operation of O.P.S., lists of O.P.S. and I.P.S. students were made available, along with biographical information, to C.I.A. components for operational use.
(House Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Pike Committee Report,* 19 January 1976).

Assistant Inspector-General Najmuddin went then into a long and irate diatribe saying in essence . . . that several of the participants were saying that the I.P.A. was run by the C.I.A., that he always opposed these rumours but now he was inclined to change his mind . . . . With all this emphasis on 'Internal Security' at the I.P.A., the U.S.A. was bringing the participants here to buy their souls . . . .
(Confidential O.P.S. Memorandum, 24 May 1971. Subject: Assistant Inspector-General Dilshad Najmuddin. From: A. Bonnefil, Chief, Participant Relations Section, International Police Academy, Washington.)

The school [INPOLSE] serves as a parallel institution for the [International] Police Academy, and several instructors referred to it as a kind of 'graduate school' for I.P.A. Philip Agee said INPOLSE was used to conceal C.I.A. training experts you didn't want kicking around the Police Academy.
(John Marks and Taylor Branch, *Harpers Weekly,* 'Reports on INPOLSE'.)

Mr. Fraser: Has O.P.S. been used by [the] C.I.A. abroad? Have any C.I.A. personnel ever worked in O.P.S. missions abroad?
Mr. Parker: Yes sir, A.I.D./O.P.S. has had a co-operative arrangement with C.I.A. missions abroad. Further details of these arrangements should be solicited from that agency . . . .
(House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearings, June 1974. Donald Fraser, Chairman; Daniel Parker, Director A.I.D.)

> Senator Abourezk's amendment considerably expands the restriction on U.S. support to police and related programs that was enacted last year .... The amendment would appear to restrict activities now undertaken by the C.I.A. under the National Security Act of 1947 for the purpose of obtaining foreign intelligence information from co-operative foreign security and intelligence services, some of which are with national police forces .... An essential ingredient of many C.I.A. relationships with foreign security and intelligence services is some limited and special training and other support, as well as the exchange of information and advice. If the Agency were restricted in these activities, our ability to perform our assigned intelligence mission would be severely curtailed ... the amendment would curtail various C.I.A. activities abroad which are in support of approved national intelligence objectives. We therefore recommend that it not be adopted.
> (William Colby, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in a letter to William Fulbright, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 31 July 1974.)

> I could go on, with other reports of O.P.S. activity which I have found in the last year, including letters from Americans indicating U.S. complicity in the use of torture in countries abroad, but I think the point is clear. This country is involved in an activity which is totally divorced from the scope and intention of U.S. foreign aid. The Office of Public Safety and the International Police Academy mocks the purpose of other A.I.D. programs and has inflicted an indelible blemish on the past records and accomplishments of U.S.A.I.D. programs .... It is time, I believe, that the Congress terminates this program and all related activities in regard to police and prison support.
> (Senator James Abourezk, U.S. Senate, 20 June 1974.)

Counter-insurgency and Public Safety

The tactics and theories of global counter-insurgency reached their most mature development as a centrepiece to American strategic planning during the decade of the 1960s. Crucial to the conceptual debates then going on within the more sophisticated military and intelligence circles of the West was the important, if not subtle, difference which was drawn between national police forces and national armies, and the role each ought to play in the destruction of radical movements within Third World societies. Insurgencies or opposition movements contained at the level of police actions were considered eminently preferable to deeper crises where national armies, in their inimicably heavy-handed and usually cumbersome style, often drove large sections of a populace into deeper sympathy with opposition movements. This distinction was part of a larger concept that regarded Malayan (1954) style police actions in pro-Western client regimes of the Third World as being preferable to Indonesian (1965) style massacres. By avoiding the intervention of a national army and the setting-up of martial law type regimes, the semblance of *formal* democratic institutions in these societies might be preserved and would, within the global system of Western 'free world' alliances, be much less of an embarrassment than allies in the form of juntas.[1]

In addition, within the Kennedy Administration rather simple 'cost effective' notions were also used to argue that effective prior police work would make the need for massive style interventions on the scale of Vietnam unnecessary. One American analyst, David Burks, testifying before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee put it this way:

> I think we have to face a reality. The reality is that when insurgents appear, the government will call upon the army to eliminate the insurgents. There can come a point when the army cannot handle this kind of situation simply because the military establishment tends to use too much force, tends to use the wrong techniques and tends, therefore, to polarize the population and gradually force the majority of those who are politically active to support the revolutionary or insurgent force . . . . Whereas a civil police force is with the people all the time, carrying on the normal functions of control of or apprehension of ordinary or common criminals and can, therefore, move very quickly whenever an insurgent problem develops.[2]

Burks was echoed in his remarks by the Director of the Agency for International Development (A.I.D.), who said in his 1964 Congressional testimony on A.I.D. appropriations that 'the police are a most sensitive point of contact between government and people, close to the focal points of unrest, and more acceptable than the army as keeper of order over long periods of time.'[3]

It was out of this type of strategic thinking that a vast expansion of American training of foreign police forces got under way. The Kennedy Administration revitalized and reorganized this aspect of the overall counterinsurgency effort under the Office of Public Safety (O.P.S.). Until the American Congress dismantled the programme in 1975 because, in the words of one Senate report, the U.S. had become 'politically identified with police terrorism' in recipient countries, the O.P.S. had trained over 7,500 senior officers at the International Police Academy and other U.S. institutions, and over a million rank-and-file police at O.P.S. affiliated academies abroad.[4]

Soon after the Kennedy Administration's 1962 reorganization of this special bureau for 'public safety' within A.I.D., the O.P.S. began to gear up a major programme in Pakistan. Over the next decade Pakistan would become the fourth largest recipient of American assistance to a foreign police force, after Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. The programme, like others elsewhere, had two essential dimensions: the training of personnel to equip expanded institutional forces and the development of a technical infrastructure. In the words of one O.P.S. document, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, the object of U.S. based training was:

> . . . to improve the administrative and operational practices of the internal

> security forces. It is best approached by a combination of participant training and technical assistance. Training in modern police administration and operations is programmed for middle and senior level police executives in order to develop a cadre of trained administrators who will be in a position to influence and initiate changes in present traditional, conservative, colonial oriented procedures.[5]

Within the decade the trainees would be in a position to influence much more than 'traditional procedures'. Before long they would be underpinning coups, counter-coups, assassinations, and by the 1976-78 period in Bangladesh this same police cadre would move into control of key economic positions in the state apparatus.

In pursuing their research into U.S. foreign policy choices at the time of the Bangladesh crisis of 1971, Carnegie researchers [see Appendix A] also investigated the role and relationships which existed between American government organs and Pakistan's security services. In an interview with Jack Goin, Director of A.I.D.'s Public Safety Programme, Carnegie staffers were given a simple summary of the strategic and tactical rationale of such programmes:

> Now, different countries, different governments, are organized differently and have different ways of doing things. But one thing they all have in common is they maintain order with a civil police force. When a country says to us that it can't do it alone and needs some help doing this, well it's part and parcel of the whole development process. Part of how the U.S. determines whether to send in a public safety program is whether the U.S. sees the individual country as part of the family of free nations. If we see that nation as part of the family, we do try to insure their safety . . .
>
> No government wants to turn to its military to do the job of the police, but this is a long-standing problem that A.I.D. police can do nothing about. That's what happened in Uruguay, for example; you don't want soldiers on the streets enforcing order, because the only way the military knows how to enforce order is the way it's been trained to do things, and that's by force. So it costs a government politically to turn to the army.

In 1963 the United States sent a number of study missions to Pakistan to formulate a police aid programme for the next decade. While field studies were being conducted by the O.P.S. in East Pakistan, the first Bengali candidates for U.S. based training under it began arriving in Washington in March 1963, for courses given at the International Police Academy (I.P.A.), the International Police Services School (INPOLSE), the F.B.I. National Academy, and more specialized training institutions. By the mid-sixties, the O.P.S. had permanent field personnel at the American consulate in Dacca to supervise the in-country programme and to recruit and select Bengali police and intelligence personnel for Stateside training. Between 1966 and 1971 Robert Janus, Leon J. Clements and Orval L. Wooner staffed the O.P.S. in Dacca. In July 1967. a high level O.P.S. official from Vietnam, Charles F. Sloane, arrived to direct the East Pakistan programme. Three of the four men, according to American sources, had alleged C.I.A. connections. Sloane, prior to his Dacca tour, had been the Assistant Co-ordinator of the Vietnam Public Safety Affairs Division and Assistant Co-ordinator of the Vietnam Division of the O.P.S. When his tour ended in Dacca in January 1969, he returned to Vietnam the following month and joined CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), a C.I.A. programme under the supervision of William Colby, who later became Director of the C.I.A. Colby's special operations for counter-insurgency programme in Vietnam, the well known Phoenix assassination programme, was part of the overall CORDS effort. In 1971, when the Pakistani crackdown in East Bengal forced the evacuation of Americans, Wooner and Janus both returned to Vietnam and joined CORDS. Like Sloane they had both previously served in Vietnam. Clements was also posted to Vietnam from Dacca, but not with CORDS.

From Pakistan and its eastern wing a steady stream of intelligence, special branch and police communications officers flowed into the I.P.A. and INPOLSE in Washington and other institutions elsewhere in the United States. Between 1961 and 1971, when East Pakistan became Bangladesh, 113 senior and middle level Pakistani police officials had undergone U.S. based training. According to information obtained under the Freedom of Informatior Act, at least 40 of the group were from the Bengali police and intelligence cadre. In East Pakistan, as it was later in Bangladesh, there was no distinction between the police and intelligence bureaucracies in the upper echelons of the services. They were, and are still, interlocking. When compared to the 414 members of the South Vietnamese national police trained over the same period, and considering the relatively huge scale of American involvement in Vietnam at the time, the number of Pakistani trainees sent to the American institutes was not insignificant. The men who came for training were important and, if they did not already, would soon dominate the branches of their respective services in the years ahead. A.B.S. Safdar, Abdur Rahim, S.A. Hakim, Musa Miyan Choudhury, Syed Amir Khasru, M.N. Huda, A.K.M. Musleuddin, Abu Syed Shahjahan, A.M.M. Aminur Rahman, Ghulam Murshed, Ali M. Jamshed, Abdul Khaleque Khan, A.H. Nurual Islam, Zafarul Huq, Khondakar Golam Mohiuddin – all the leading personalities of Bangladesh's internal security apparatus – moved through the classrooms of the I.P.A. and INPOLSE institutes. In Bangladesh they came to form something of a secret state within a state, obscure but crucial in their behind-the-scenes involvement in many of the events in the country's bloody and traumatic history.

In the years prior to 1971, nearly all these leading Bengali police and intelligence officials had been involved in the surveillance, detention and prosecution of democratic and nationalist politicians in East Pakistan. With the exception of one senior police and intelligence officer who joined the Mukti Bahini and survived the Liberation War, the entire senior Bengali officer cadre of the East Pakistan Police Service, Intelligence Bureau and Special Branch actively collaborated or were alleged to have collaborated with the Pakistan Army, following the crackdown in Dacca on 25 March

1971 which sparked off the civil war. These were the Vichy of Bangladesh. As has been examined in this book, despite demands from younger nationalist elements no recrimination was taken against these men after independence, except for relieving them of their official responsibilities. As has also been discussed in the book, the Mujib government began, in 1974, the paradoxical and ironic rehabilitation of these security service personalities in the face of a radicalized opposition then emerging out of the regime's once most militant, but now disillusioned supporters. Their reintegration into positions in Bangladesh's intelligence structure placed a number of them, such as Safdar, in posts ideally suited for their alleged co-operation with the coup d'état against Mujib in August 1975. It was from these positions, according to Bangladeshi and American sources, that they also allegedly maintained liaison with their Western counterparts.

C.I.A. Police Training versus the Abourezk Amendment

The training programmes which brought nearly all the leading figures of what was to become Bangladesh's National Security Intelligence agency (N.S.I.) to the United States were abolished in 1975 by an Act of the U.S. Congress. As of 1 July 1975 it became illegal for U.S.A.I.D. funds 'to provide any financial support for police, prisons, or other law enforcement forces for any foreign government'. The campaign to abolish the O.P.S. was led by Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota. Speaking on his controversial amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, Abourezk said in June 1974 on the floor of the U.S. Senate:

> Since the late 1950s a paramount concern of American policymakers has been the preservation of social stability in countries deemed favorable to U.S. trade and investment. U.S. military planning has been shaped by the need to provide on a moment's notice counter-insurgency forces that can be flown in to the aid of friendly regimes threatened by popular insurrection. The military assistance program has been used to upgrade the capabilities of indigenous forces to overcome the rural guerrilla forces. Finally on the premise that the police constitute the first line of defense against subversion, the Agency for International Development has funnelled American funds and supplies into the hands of Third World police forces . . . .
>
> The public safety program is not large in comparison to the military aid program – but its supporters can muster some impressive-arguments in its favor. It is argued, for instance, that the police – being interspersed among the population – are more effective than the military in controlling low-scale insurgency. Supporters of the police assistance program also point out that police forces are cheaper to maintain than military forces, since they do not require expensive 'hardware' like planes, tanks and artillery.
>
> These arguments advanced by men like Col. Edward Lansdale, formerly

> of the C.I.A., received their most favourable response from President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, then the Attorney General, in the early 1960s . . . . The State Department memorandum establishing the Office of Public Safety is noteworthy for its stronger language – the memo, issued in November 1962, declared that A.I.D. will 'vest the Office of Public Safety with . . . powers greater than any other technical office or division of A.I.D.'
>
> The Office of Public Safety is empowered to assist Third World police organizations in three ways: first, by sending 'public safety advisers' who provide 'in-country' training for rank and file policemen only, at the expense of the host country; second, by providing training at the International Police Academy and other U.S. schools for senior police officers and technicians; and third, by shipping weapons, ammunition, radios, petrol, cars, jeeps, chemical munitions, and related equipment . . . .
>
> Mr. President, there are other programs in the Office of Public Safety which concern me a great deal. According to reports which I received last year, the U.S. Government has been training foreign policemen in bomb-making at a remote desert camp in Texas. At the U.S. Border Patrol Academy in Los Fresnos, Texas, foreign policeman are taught the design, manufacture and potential uses of home-made bombs and incendiary devices by I.P.A. instructors. At least 165 policemen have taken this 'Technical Investigations Course' since it was first offered in 1969 . . . .
>
> In addition to the bomb school, I have learned that International Police Academy graduates also attend a School for Psychological Operations at Fort Bragg, N.C. The School which is held at the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance at Fort Bragg, N.C., includes courses with such titles as: subversive insurgent methods, psychological operations in support of internal defense and development, the role of intelligence and internal defense. According to Adkins the purpose of the School is to 'teach police how the military handles psychological warfare problems'.
>
> I could go on, with other reports of O.P.S. activity which I have found in the last year including letters from Americans indicating U.S. complicity in the use of torture in countries abroad, but I think the point is clear. This country is involved in an activity which is totally divorced from the scope and intention of U.S. foreign aid. The Office of Public Safety and the International Police Academy mocks the purpose of other A.I.D. programs and has inflicted an indelible blemish on the past records and accomplishments of U.S.A.I.D. programs . . . . It is time, I believe, that the Congress terminates this program and all related activities in regard to police and prison support.[6]

Before the Abourezk Amendment finally passed the American Congress, a counter-campaign was initiated to prevent passage of the new legislation. Leading the effort was William Colby, Director of the C.I.A. In late July 1974, in a private letter written to William Fulbright, Colby argued against the Abourezk Amendment, declaring that the police training programmes had been highly useful in 'obtaining foreign intelligence' co-operation from those trained'. The Colby letter was leaked to the press. Colby wrote to Fulbright:

> Senator Abourezk's amendment considerably expands the restriction on U.S. support to police and related programs that was enacted last year as part of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973. The 1973 restrictions apply only to activities funded under the Foreign Assistance Act whereas Senator Abourezk's amendment would extend the restriction to specified activities funded under *any law*. Another important aspect of Senator Abourezk's amendment is that it applies restrictions not just to involvement with foreign police services and related programs as the 1973 law did, but also to 'internal security forces' of any foreign government or any program of internal intelligence . . .
>
> *The amendment would appear to restrict activities now undertaken by the C.I.A. under the National Security Act of 1947 for the purpose of obtaining foreign intelligence information from co-operative foreign security and intelligence services, some of which are with national police forces.* In addition, in many areas of the world the protection of U.S. personnel, installations and security interests depends heavily on the effectiveness and support of foreign internal security services, as does effective action to counter terrorist activities and narcotics traffic. *An essential ingredient of many C.I.A. relationships with foreign security and intelligence services is some limited and special training and other support, as well as the exchange of information and advice. If the Agency were restricted in these activities, our ability to perform our assigned intelligence mission would be severely curtailed . . . the amendment would curtail various C.I.A. activities abroad which are in support of approved national intelligence objectives. We therefore recommend that it not be adopted.*[7]

Further Congressional hearings in the summer of 1974 confirmed C.I.A. penetration of foreign police through the O.P.S. programme. In hearings before the House Foreign Affairs Committee concerning U.S. funded training at the International Police Academy, Daniel Parker, Director of the Agency for International Development (A.I.D.) admitted to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Donald Fraser, that A.I.D. and O.P.S. had been utilized by the C.I.A.

> *Mr. Fraser:* Has O.P.S. been used by [the] C.I.A. abroad? Have any C.I.A. personnel ever worked in O.P.S. missions abroad?
> *Mr. Parker:* Yes sir, A.I.D./O.P.S. has had a co-operative arrangement with the C.I.A. missions abroad. Further details of these arrangement should be solicited from that Agency . . . .
> *Mr. Fraser:* Does I.P.A. [International Police Academy] training include interrogation methods? Do you think in some cases that might conceivably help the police of an anti-democratic government smash the democratic opposition?
> *Mr. Parker:* The subject 'Interviews and Interrogations' is taught as part of criminal investigation speciality courses at the I.P.A. It is our view that this course is one element in helping build effective civil police institutions and,

> in turn, that such institutions are one of the necessary conditions for development. The means are neutral and it is quite possible that at some later date the police trained here may participate in repression. But I would deny that the contents of the academy curriculum bear on the causes of such repression . . . .
>
> *Mr. Fraser:* I gather that one of the basic assumptions behind the O.P.S. program is that the violent overthrow of democratically elected governments is undesirable. Am I correct? In that case were A.I.D. and O.P.S. unhappy with the overthrow of the Allende government?
>
> *Mr. Parker:* You are, of course, correct in your statement that one of the basic assumptions of U.S. foreign policy and A.I.D.'s public safety programs is that the violent overthrow of democratically elected governments is undesirable. I was not happy at the overthrow of the Allende government.[8]

Press exposure of links between police training, public safety programmes and American intelligence agencies continued throughout 1975 with the identification of new schools and institutes directed to agent recruitment. In 1975 John Marks, author of *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence*, and Taylor Branch uncovered a previously unknown police training school called INPOLSE. According to documents and information subsequently obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, it has been confirmed that numerous top officials of Bangladesh's present National Security Intelligence (N.S.I.) Agency attended INPOLSE. According to Marks and Branch's report published in *Harpers' Weekly*:

> Independent sources provided us with hard evidence that International Police Services Inc. [INPOLSE] operated for nearly 23 years as an arm of the C.I.A., under cover as a private firm. Part of its business was to export police wares to foreign police forces – guns, ammunition, nightsticks, handcuffs, holsters, uniforms, radios, and relatively unsophisticated kinds of bugging and surveillance equipment. But according to INPOLSE officials, this export was only a sideline to the larger task of education. Over the years, INPOLSE provided specialized training in police techniques to thousands of foreign policemen from 87 countries around the world.
>
> Philip Agee, an ex-C.I.A. operative of nine years experience in Latin America, described how in 1965 he sent one of the Agency's Uruguayan agents, Alejandro Otero, to INPOLSE for training. Otero was then Chief of Intelligence for Montevideo, Uruguay, police department. In an interview in London, Agee said that the special courses in Washington were designed 'to jack up' Otero and 'get him going against the Tupamaros', the strongest group of Uruguayan revolutionaries at one time . . . .
>
> He told us that A.I.D.'s own International Police Academy, a school similar to INPOLSE that is run out of an old trolley barn in Georgetown, was originally established by the C.I.A. He went on to say that C.I.A. operatives regularly used the A.I.D. Public Safety programs for cover in Uruguay and elsewhere, and that the Agency took advantage of A.I.D.'s contact with foreign police forces to recruit its agents from among the

> local cops. Agee recounted how his request to have Otero trained was forwarded to James Angleton's counter-intelligence staff at C.I.A. headquarters, and how Otero was assigned to 12 weeks at the International Police Academy followed by four weeks at the C.I.A.'s 'private' school, INPOLSE.
>
> Angleton is the same senior C.I.A. official who resigned last month in the wake of disclosures that his office had been involved in large-scale domestic operations – seemingly in violation of the C.I.A.'s charter. Agee stated – and three other C.I.A. sources confirmed – that Angleton's counter-intelligence office also controlled the C.I.A.'s worldwide police liaison, infiltration and training programmes. We have learned that the actual C.I.A. operation that funneled people like Otero into training assignments was known by the acronym 'DTBAIL', and that a former Angleton staffer named Byron Engle moved from the C.I.A. in 1962 to head the entire Office of Public Safety in A.I.D. . . .
>
> None of the Congressional hearings or probes disclosed the operations of INPOLSE, even though it was older and at least as large as the Police Academy . . . . The school serves as a parallel institution for the Police Academy, and several instructors referred to it as a kind of 'graduate school' for I.P.A. Philip Agee said INPOLSE was used to conceal C.I.A. training experts whom 'you didn't want kicking around the Police Academy'. One high C.I.A. official, who retired two years ago from Agency headquarters here, observed that INPOLSE 'performed services that I.P.A. was not capable of performing'.[9]

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act confirm that at least one-third of the Bengali personnel trained in the United States went on from instruction at the International Police Academy and other institutes to INPOLSE training. Currently nearly every one of these men is a top official in Bangladesh's National Security Intelligence Agency or in the country's paramilitary police.

Police Telecommunications and Military Aid

Besides the training of senior police/intelligence personnel in the United States, the O.P.S., in 1963, began a series of field-studies designed to evaluate what technical infrastructure would be necessary and consistent with the overall expansion of Pakistan's internal security set-up. In the first phase, great emphasis was placed on the development of a provincial communications grid in East Pakistan. In September 1963 Paul Katz, a senior telecommunications engineer from O.P.S. Technical Services Division, arrived in East Pakistan. Katz was greeted by Brigadier Azar Khan, Joint Director of Pakistan's Intelligence Bureau and principal liaison officer for the Public Safety Programme in its opening period. Katz's mission to Dacca was to conduct a detailed communications survey of the needs of Pakistan's Intelligence Bureau, West Pakistan's Provincial Police, West Pakistan's Rangers, the Frontier Constabulary, the East Pakistan Rifles and the East Pakistan

Provincial Police. According to Katz's Mission Report, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, 'Brigadier Khan suggested that priority be given East Pakistan due to the serious lack of police communications in that area . . . . The communications survey disclosed that while the communications needs of East and West Pakistan's civil internal security forces are great, those of the East Pakistan Provincial Police (E.P.P.) are considered to be of a higher priority as no police communication system exists in this area.' Katz's 42 page report also made a number of broader conclusions and recommendations:

> The problem facing the East Pakistan Provincial Police (E.P.P.) can be appreciated if one realizes that, virtually without communications capability, a 25,000 man police force is responsible for effective control of crime, maintenance of law and order, checking subversive activities, prevention and control of civil disturbances in a country with a population of over 50 million people, covering an area of more than 55,000 square miles . . .
>
> In most internal security operations, it is also imperative that communications be secure from interception and compromise. Therefore, a means of sending coded messages is needed. This feature is not presently obtainable . . . . There are many recorded instances of the transmission of unauthorized orders designed to subvert or undermine control in internal security agencies. This danger would be minimized were E.P.P. to have physical and operational control over their system . . . .
>
> Further, civil communications systems are notoriously subject to ensuing disruption of service. The recent threat of strike by the Pakistan Postal and Telephone Departments, which was fortunately averted, further demonstrates the paramount need for a self-sustaining police security telecommunications network . . . . A police security telecommunications system must be self-sustaining particularly in times of civil strife.[10]

Four months before arriving in East Pakistan Katz did a similar tour in Latin America, inspecting the communications of the Colombian National Police and the Administrative Department of Security (D.A.S.), the country's political police. His recommendations in Bogota were not unlike those made in Dacca. The principles were global. Katz argued that both the D.A.S. and the civil police were operationally hampered because each maintained separate and inadequate communications systems. Katz argued that the two be merged and jointly operated. He proposed that general A.I.D. funds being provided to the Bogota authorities be linked to Colombia's acceptance of the proposal. The Colombian government ultimately agreed to the Katz plan, and a multimillion dollar programme was organized which established a modern nationwide radio/teletype communications network. Communications set-ups such as these within Third World countries, designed and supplied by the U.S., would of course allow, during future crises within these states, crucial access by Western signals and electronic intelligence.

Recent exposures in the American and British press have revealed how the building of communications networks during the 1950s and 1960s had a significant influence on the development of Western global capabilities for SIGINT, signals intelligence. According to the British weekly, *New Statesman*:

> [Great Britain's] G.C.H.Q. [Government Communications Headquarters] is a partner in a multinational 'Sigint pact', whose task is to monitor the entire globe. The basic instrument of unity is an agreement signed between the United States and the U.K. in 1947, known as the UKUSA pact, which Canada, Australia and New Zealand later joined. Each of the main participants – N.S.A., G.C.H.Q., Australia's Defence Signals Division (D.S.D.) and Canada's Communication Branch of the National Research Council (C.E.B.R.C.) – is in charge of Sigint activities in a given region. G.C.H.Q.'s territory is Africa and Europe west of the Ural mountains . . . . The scale of international communications has increased enormously over the last 30 years and the Sigint agencies have swollen to a corresponding size. N.S.A. [America's National Security Agency] employs more than 120,000 people in different parts of the world. In 1975 the Church Committee of the U.S. Senate uncovered N.S.A. programmes to intercept the international telephone and telex messages of targeted American citizens. Other intelligence agencies provided 'watch lists' to N.S.A. By 1974 there were extensive files on 75,000 people . . . . Sigint has shifted its aim toward weaker targets: Third World governments, dissident civilian nationals, economic intelligence and low grade communications from major powers . . . . Allies must be spied upon because one day they might become enemies; countries which seem remote now must nevertheless be monitored because they might one day become part of a larger conflict.[11]

In East Pakistan, Paul Katz proposed for a start that, as 'an initial phase, a complete telecommunications system to provide adequate service from the provincial headquarters in Dacca to the range headquarters at Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshani, and to 18 districts would be required'. According to Joseph J. Corr, the Chief O.P.S. adviser to Pakistan, who was interviewed by Carnegie researchers in their study of the '71 conflict, the police assistance programme developed in the following manner:

> For several years we had been working with police on an extensive program with East Pakistan. There were three tranches to this, and a total projected cost of three million dollars. You have to understand that in this country, communication facilities are extremely limited – primitive, not only military and police communications, but ordinary phone lines and cables that you have to hook into. We set it up so that the first increment would link Dacca to the principal towns in East Pakistan. The second tranche – this was part of the first tranche rather – was to set up communications with Dacca. Next we were going to go outside of the principal cities to the subdistrict level, then from there finally to the lowest level.

Before civil war broke out in March 1971, the O.P.S. communications programme had completed two tranches of the development scheme. Following Independence the new government under Mujib was uninterested in renewing the programme. Two rather straightforward factors were responsible for the new government's attitude: Kissinger's policy had been to support the Pakistanis throughout the Liberation War and most of the Bengali O.P.S. trainees had been part of that minute percentage of the population who actively collaborated with the Pakistan Army. On both counts the new nationalist authorities in Dacca were uninterested in this type of American largesse.

Immediately after Mujib was killed, measures were taken to revive the old O.P.S. development programme. After the August coup d'état, I.P.A. and INPOLSE graduates assumed powerful roles and began to exercise a degree of political and bureaucratic authority none of them had possessed before, even during the days of Pakistan. The snag in the rehabilitation of the old O.P.S./A.I.D. connection lay in the fact that the Abourezk Amendment had abolished all the O.P.S. operations a month before Mujib's murder. According to Western diplomatic sources, however, an alternative was worked out via the British government. A year after the coup, the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, B.G. Smallman, and the Bangladesh Home Secretary, Salahuddin Ahmed, signed an aid agreement whereby the British authorities were to provide £720,000 'for the improvement of police telecommunications'. This was the figure needed to complete the third tranche of the original O.P.S./A.I.D. scheme. Funds, impossible to obtain from the U.S. Congress, were now readily made available from British overseas aid allocations. The British Parliament had no Abourezk Amendment which set regulations or standards for foreign security assistance. According to the report in *The Bangladesh Times* at that time, 'the project when implemented will provide the Bangladesh Police with a basic system of direct radio communications to all important police stations and posts in the rural areas, and a V.H.F. back-up system from Dacca to the main outlying district stations for use at night. Under its technical assistance programme the British government will also provide experienced consultant services to participate in the implementation of the project.' Besides the British authorities the governments of Saudi Arabia, and Iran under the Shah, also exhibited little restraint in their new found interest in Bangladesh's post-Mujib era.

It was not unusual or unexpected that the British authorities should take up the slack where the United States, due to internal constraints, was now somewhat restrained externally. In fact, in the era of the Malaya Emergency in the fifties, the British government had initiated the development of a science of post-colonial counter-insurgency under the auspices of Robert Thompson and other Sandhurst experts. The training of Third World paramilitary police and intelligence expertise was undertaken by the Commonwealth during the 1950s and '60s before the United States got into the field in a big way. Men like Safdar had received security intelligence training in Britain as far back as 1963 and in Canada in 1954.

But within a year of committing itself to the completion of the O.P.S.

telecommunications grid, the British government expanded its commitment to security assistance for Bangladesh with the arrival of a special British Military Mission in Dacca. In November 1975, following the coup d'état which had killed Mujib in August of that year, a totally unanticipated Marxist-orientated insurrection occurred, summoning up surprising support from the ranks of the armed forces. This development reportedly caught the Western powers and the Soviets completely by surprise and revealed, at least to the West, how shallowly developed its military links, sources and assets within the Bangladesh Armed Forces were. Networks within the police and national intelligence were more or less intact from the Pakistan period. But the new and extremely young leadership of the Bangladesh Army was drawn from an officer cadre which during the period of a united Pakistan had been insignificant and lower echelon, in keeping with the general discrimination against the Bengalis in the Pakistani services. In contrast to Western knowledge of and links with the Pakistan Army, or even the Indian Armed Forces, European and American perceptions of the power relations, personalities and political dynamics within the Bangladesh Army were inferior in the extreme, as of 1975. The arrival of the British military advisory group was reportedly intended to fix all that. However, the unit's tasks were not without controversy. Discussion of the Mission was censored from the Bangladesh press, but the [London] *Guardian's* South Asia Correspondent, Simon Winchester, reported from Dacca on 20 December 1977:

> Considerable opposition is being voiced in Bangladesh to a number of British government aid programmes which critics say are helping to reinforce suppression of political opposition to General Ziaur Rahman's military dictatorship. In particular, British assistance now being given to the Bangladesh police force and army, as well as British participation in a controversial development programme in a remote hill region near the Burmese border, have been singled out for criticism. In all cases opponents of the schemes protest that, instead of helping the poor people of Bangladesh, the British government is helping to support a regime which practises detention without trial, summary execution and suppression of free speech, as often as not directed against the people the Western governments should be trying to help.
>
> The aid programmes which are at the focus of the storm are not by Bangladesh aid standards especially large. One worth £750,000 is an Overseas Development Ministry project to give the national police force of Bangladesh radio communications. Marconi, the contractor, is setting up a series of V.H.F. stations that will enable the police in all parts of the country to be in touch with national HQ here in Dacca.
>
> The second plan cost the British government almost nothing, but is seen as symbolic of what critics call 'the British sense of priorities – law and order first, real aid second'. Eight senior British military officers – six soldiers (including one colonel in the S.A.S.), a sailor and an air force officer – are on loan to the Bangladesh government to set up an officers' staff college north of the capital.
>
> 'The problem is that for too long the Western media have portrayed

> Bangladesh as a nation of famine and floods,' said the official of an international organization. 'But it should also be remembered that for the past two years this has been a country ruled by a peculiarly tough military dictatorship. There are thousands of people in political prisons. More than 255 people have been executed since the attempted coup of October [1977].' The senior officer of an English aid organization agreed, 'Britain seems to have this obsession with law and order. It seems to think that unless you have a police force that can be mobilized at the flick of a switch, or army that is well up on contemporary counter-insurgency techniques, there is no point in pouring out money for food or shelter or clothing. Well, we disagree. Food for the hungry is truly vital. Radios for the police and roads for the army can come later. At least the taxpayers in England should have a chance to decide.'
> ('Where Britain May Be Aiding an Armed Dictatorship', *The Guardian*, London, 20 December 1977.)

Winchester's story appeared following reports of mass executions having been carried out against opponents of the military government. Further details about the British military advisory mission were reported in the *Economic and Political Weekly* of Bombay in March 1978. According to this source:

> In July 1977 an eight-man British military advisory team commanded by Colonel T.A. Gibson arrived in Dacca. The ostensible object of the Gibson Mission is to set up a Military Staff College at Savar outside Dacca. This is where Indian military advisers trained Mujib's Rakkhi Bahini in 1972. What is generally not known is the extent of opposition which existed inside the Bangladesh Armed Forces to allowing the Gibson Team into the country. The rebellions in September and October are believed to have been in part connected to objections to the British Military Mission. Of the Twelve Demands which constituted the principles of the Soldiers' Mutiny of November 7, 1975 the 'complete abolition of British colonial practices within the armed forces' had been one of the fundamentals of the uprising. Now within a year and a half of the revolt a British military training mission was setting up permanent shop in Bangladesh.
>
> The more serious objection to the Gibson Mission was that its main alleged purpose was not training but military intelligence. Gibson and other members of his unit are described in Bangladesh Army circles as senior members of the British Army's 'Special Air Services' Brigade. The S.A.S. is the crack counter-insurgency unit of the British Army. It is the legacy of Robert Thompson's Malay Emergency strategy and continues on active operations in Oman, Malaysia, and Northern Ireland among other places. Ex-S.A.S. members have turned up in Africa as mercenaries in the Angolan civil war and in the Rhodesian Army. 'The November 1975 uprising took the Western countries by complete surprise here,' says a well-informed Bengali. 'They realised how poor their intelligence was, having historically based it on [West] Pakistan contacts. Within the government and the armed forces it is generally believed, and privately discussed, that the real purpose for the British Military Mission is to

> prepare dossiers for Western intelligence on the entire officer corps forces and the Bangladesh Army in particular. They want to know when Zia falls, who can be the next pro-Western Ayub Khan. But they also want to be able to spot any Marxists like Abu Taher. They want to know who is politically reliable. You can't do that sitting in London or in an office in the Pentagon. Computers will not tell you. Personal contact might.[12]

The Ascendancy of the National Security Intelligence Agency

In the period after Mujib's death, another quiet, rather unnoticed, but significant phenomenon emerged out of the senior ranks of Bangladesh's Security Services. In one sense what happened had not been seen since 1958, when Field Marshal Ayub Khan's coup d'état in Pakistan not only presaged the extraordinary expansion of the country's Armed Forces budget, but also led to the direct control of economic ministries, state corporations and private firms by military officers and their families. Yet, in Ayub's time, this privilege of patronage and access to corrupt gain was kept within the ranks of the senior military cadres. Police and intelligence officials were confined to smaller crumbs at the banquet table of international aid and the attendant foreign contracts. Following the 1975 developments in Dacca, the police and internal security apparatus received an economic boost which was qualitatively above anything it had ever previously known, even in the 'security decade' of Ayub's military dictatorship.

In the Pakistan era no police or intelligence official had ever reached the ministerial rank of Secretary. The Director of Intelligence was always subordinate in authority to the Home Secretary. But following the coup which killed Mujib, not only was Safdar, as Director-General of the National Security Intelligence Agency (N.S.I.), promoted to the level of ministerial Secretary, but so were numerous other police and intelligence personnel. To those outside Bangladesh's bureaucratic ranks, these intra-bureaucratic niceties may seem of small importance, but within them the significance of the rearranged hierarchy was not lost. Police and intelligence officials took over ministries and state corporations in critical locations of economic power and patronage. In a highly dependent economy, such as Bangladesh, where over 50% of state expenditures are foreign financed, control of crucial locations in the structure through which external funds and commodities are channelled can mean an important economic base on which to build influence.

Following the events of 1975, Bangladesh's intelligence and police service began to build its economic power with unprecedented style. The former Inspector General of Police, A.H. Nurul Islam, a 1968 graduate of the International Police Academy, took over control of the local municipal corporation known as the Dacca Improvement Trust (D.I.T.). The D.I.T. controls the allocation of all permits for construction in the capital and is the controlling agent authorizing the purchase of plots in exclusive new suburbs such as Gulshan. The patronage and financial potential of the D.I.T. is a well-known cliché in Dacca. Permits are often had at a price. At the Consumer Supply Corporation (C.S.C.), another highly placed police officer, a former Additional Inspector-General of Police, K.C. Mohiuddin, took over as Chairman. All commodities imported into Bangladesh must pass through the C.S.C.'s authorizing channel before being distributed within the country. In the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Syed Amir Khasuru, another graduate of the I.P.A. in 1968 and a police official who in fact was partially rehabilitated by Mujib during the 1973-74 period and appointed a Joint-Secretary in the Relief Ministry, was promoted after Mujib's death and took over direction of the Ministry; like the others, with the rank of full Secretary. Other police/intelligence officials rose similarly, such as Salauddin Ahmed, who became Chairman of the Jute Mills Corporation (jute being Bangladesh's principal export), and later Chairman of the Sugar Corporation. The Ministry of Fisheries, Livestock and Forestry was taken over by another previous Inspector-General of Police, Abdul Khaleque, in this same period.

Others such as Abdur Rahim, who has been discussed in detail earlier in this book, moved in 1976-77 to take over direction of the country's Establishment Division. This is one of the most powerful ministries in the overall control of the national bureaucracy. Rahim, later in 1978, moved on to become Director of the Administrative Staff College in Dacca, from which all civil servants, and more recently senior military officers, have begun to receive specialised training. Again, all these positions were never previously held by police or intelligence personnel. The takeover of such positions by the country's intelligence cadres is simply another reflection of the discreet, but powerful position this 'old boy' network assumed after 1975.

With all this said, it still tells us little or nothing about the family business relationships which, with great coincidence, seem to extend outwards from the security services. One of the better known of several contemporary scandals is associated with Shafi Ahmed Chaudhury, a food importer who as the agent of the American firm, Continental Grains, handles the importation of American wheat under the U.S. PL480 programme. Chaudhury is the brother of E.A. Chaudhury, one of the top senior police and intelligence officials in the country. According to a high level Bangladesh government official with intimate knowledge of the family's business operations, 'In terms of liquid assets Shafi Chaudhury is now the richest man in Bangladesh.' He is compared frequently to Jahurul Islam, a man popularly known as Bangladesh's 'Rockefeller' and a former business associate of the convicted swindler and British M.P., John Stonehouse. Islam allegedly made a substantial fortune by walking off with $4 million in World Bank funds. According to press reports this was done under an inflated contract set up to drill tube wells in the Bank's vast Northwest irrigation project. When fixed capital assets and foreign holdings are taken into account, Islam, who now runs his own multinational firm based in Abu Dhabi, is still considered the entrepreneur with a more substantial fortune than Chaudhury. In 1978-79 Islam became a significant financial contributor to General Ziaur Rahman's new political creation, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (B.N.P.); and at least two previous company directors of Islam's Dacca based Navada Traders, Zakaria Chaudhury and Habidullah Khan, joined General Zia's cabinet. By the end of the 1970s Bangladesh had settled down to the familiar pattern of a highly dependent, corrupt, right-wing regime dominated by its military and security services establishments with all the attendant daily populist rhetoric of nationalism and development. But this very condition was the antithesis of the goals, the hopes and the sacrifices with which the decade of Independence had opened.

Notes and References

1. Lobe, *United States National Security Policy and Aid to the Thailand Police,* (Univérsity of Denver, Colorado, 1977), p. 5. Lobe writes: 'The CIA was also vitally interested in collecting intelligence from foreign police officers who had access to information on communists, 'trouble-makers', politicians, ambitious military men, labor agitators, and other individuals who might possibly create difficulties for the U.S. To this end, the CIA cultivated surreptitious relationships with foreign policemen and assisted police departments in creating special intelligence gathering units . . . . The Agency could now easily place their own "covers" into the programmes to develop contacts and recruits in the local police force. CIA covers could also work undetected to bolster the foreign police department's political surveillance units.'
2. U.S. Senate, Cte. on Foreign Relations, Subcte. on American Republics' Affairs, Survey of the Alliance for Progress, Compilation of Studies and Hearings, 91st Congress, 1st Session, p. 414.
3. U.S. Senate, Cte. on Appropriations, *Foreign Assistance Appropriations, 1965, Hearings,* 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 1964, p. 82.
4. U.S. Senate, Cte. on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Policies and Programs in Brazil, Hearings*, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1971; *ibid., Guatemala and the Dominican Republic,* Staff Memo, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1971; and M.T. Klare, *Supplying Repression,* (The Field Foundation, New York, 1977), p. 19.
5. U.S. A.I.D., Project Implementation Order/Pakistan (O/P No. 391-113-1-00119).
6. Congressional Record, 22 June 1974; see also 1 Oct. 1973.
7. Letter from William E. Colby to Senator J. William Fulbright, 31 July 1974; see also Jack Anderson, *The Washington Post,* 19 Aug. 1974.
8. U.S. House of Representatives, House Foreign Affairs Cte., *Foreign Assistance Request Hearings,* 1974, pp. 175-89.
9. T. Branch and J. Marks, 'Tracking The CIA', *Harpers Weekly,* 24 Jan. 1975.
10. P. Katz, Pakistan Police Communications Survey Report: East Pakistan Provincial Police (A.I.D., Washington, D.C., Dec. 1963), pp. 3-6.
11. 'Tentacles – the World of Electronic Spying', *New Statesman,* 2 Feb. 1979.
12. 'Murder in Dacca', *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), 25 March 1978.

A Select Chronology

1947	
August 15	Pakistan and India declared formally independent from Britain.
1952	
March	Language Movement – agitation for adoption of Bengali as one of Pakistan's national languages.
1954	
May	Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement signed with the United States.
1955	
September	Pakistan joins CENTO
October 14	'One Unit' system in West Pakistan; all provincial boundaries and elected assemblies dissolved.
1958	
October 7	Pakistan Army seizes power in coup under General Ayub Khan.
1967	
December 19	Agartala Conspiracy Case opened by Pakistan Government against Awami League leadership.
1968	
November 7	Mass agitations against Ayub government begins.
1969	
February 22	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman released from prison; Agartala Case dropped.
March 26	Ayub government collapses; General Yahya Khan assumes power; elections promised and 'One Unit' system dissolved.
1970	
December 7	Awami League wins absolute majority in Pakistan National Assembly election.
December 20	Bhutto declares his People's Party will not sit in opposition, says 'majority alone doesn't count in national politics'.
1971	
March 1	General Yahya Khan postpones convening of National Assembly.
March 2	Students League leaders at mammoth rally hoist Bangladesh flag; 'non-violent non-cooperation movement' begins.

March 7	Mujib declares at Race Course meeting struggle is for complete 'emancipation and independence'.
March 25	*The Black Night:* Pakistan Army cracks down in Dacca; Mujib arrested and flown to West Pakistan; civil war begins.
March 29	Abu Taher arrested in Quetta, West Pakistan; released and escapes to India.
April 12	Bangladesh Provisional Government declared in Calcutta.
Spring/Summer	Kissinger begins China initiative via Pakistan military authorities
June/Oct	Secret contacts between U.S. and Mustaque faction of Awami League in Calcutta.
July	Taher assumes command of 11th Sector in Liberation War.
Oct/Nov	Taher commands at siege of Kamalpur, badly wounded, loses left leg.
December 16	Dacca liberated after Indian Army intervenes.

1972

January 10	Mujib returns to heroic welcome in Dacca after Bhutto orders his release from prison in Pakistan.
October 21	J.S.D. (Socialist National Party) founded in Dacca as 'socialist mass organization'.

1973 & 1974	Over 1,000 Bengali officers repatriated from Pakistan.
Jan/Feb	Two general strikes against Mujib government protesting shortages, prices and corruption.
March 17	Minto Road Massacre – 30 persons killed and wounded during a J.S.D. led 'hunger march'. J.S.D. President Jalil and General Secretary Rab arrested.
September	Mujib visits Washington and rebuffed by Americans on aid.
October	Famine deepens; estimated 50,000 peasants starve.

1975

December	Facing growing unrest Mujib declares one party (BAKSAL) presidential system, terms it the 'Second Revolution'; underground Maoist leader Siraj Sikdar, of the Sharbohara (Proletarian) Party, captured and killed in police custody.
March 20	Majors Rashid and Farooq meet Major-General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) to discuss coup plans.
August 15	Mujib killed in coup; Mustaque takes over as President; Zia becomes Army Chief of Staff.
November 3	Counter-coup led by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf; Zia arrested and forced to resign as Chief of Staff.
November 4	Brig. Khaled's relatives lead pro-Mujib demonstration.
November 5	Four Mujib government ministers killed in Dacca Central Jail.
November 7	General insurrection in Dacca and outlying districts organized by Colonel Abu Taher and mass organizations of J.S.D.; 'Twelve Demands' declared by Revolutionary Soldiers Organization; Taher releases Zia from custody.

November 8	Jalil, Rab and other political prisoners released.
November 15	J.S.D. disassociates itself from Zia as paramilitary police begin crackdown on insurrectionary forces.
November 23	Zia's counter-coup; J.S.D. leaders Jalil and Rab re-arrested.
November 24	Abu Taher arrested.

1976

June 21	Secret trial of Taher opens in Dacca Central Jail.
July 21	Taher executed, Dacca Central Jail, 4.a.m.

A Political Glossary of Personalities and Organizations

Personalities

Afzal, A.T.M.:	Chief Prosecutor in Taher trial.
Ahmed, Salauddin:	Home Secretary at time of mass executions October-December 1977.
Ayub Khan:	President of Pakistan 1958-69.
Bhashani, Maulana:	Chairman, pro-Peking National Awami Party.
Bhutto, Zulfiquar Ali:	Prime Minister of Pakistan 1972-77.
Chashi, Mabub Alam:	Aide to Mustaque and later, Zia.
Cherry, Philip:	C.I.A. Station Chief Bangladesh 1974-76.
Haider, Yusuf:	Chairman, Special Military Tribunal No. 1, which secretly tried Taher and 33 others.
Huda, M.N.:	Director, National Security Intelligence.
Huq, Abdul:	Leader pro-Peking, East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist).
Jalil, M.A.:	President of Socialist National Party (J.S.D.).
Khaled, Musharraf:	Leader of 3 November 1975 counter-coup; killed 7 November.
Khan, Enayethullah:	Journalist; served Mustaque and later in General Zia's cabinet.
Khan, Sirajul Alam:	Leading figure in Socialist National Party (J.S.D.).
Mujibur Rahman:	Prime Minister of Bangladesh 1972-75; killed in coup of 15 August 1975.
Mustaque, Khondakar Ahmed:	President of Bangladesh after murder of Mujib; toppled from power November 1975.
Osmany, M.A.G.:	First C-and-C, Bangladesh Armed Forces during 1971 War of Liberation.
Rahman, Farooq:	One of the Majors who overthrew Mujib.
Rashid, (Major):	One of the Majors who overthrew Mujib.
Safdar, A.B.S.	Director-General of National Security Intelligence; served Mustaque and Zia.
Shafiullah:	Chief of Staff, Bangladesh Army prior to overthrow of Mujib.
Sikdar, Siraj:	Leading figure in Sharbohara Party; killed in police custody December 1975.
Taher, Abu:	Military leader of 7 November 1975 uprising.
Tajuddin Ahmed:	First Prime Minister of Bangladesh; killed in Dacca Jail 5 November 1975.
Thakur, Taheruddin:	State Minister, Mujib government; close aide to Mustaque after August 1975 coup.
Toaha, Mohammed:	Leader, pro-Peking East Bengal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist).
Yahya Khan:	President of Pakistan, March 1969 to December 1971.
Ziaur Rahman (Zia):	Army Chief of Staff after Mujib's fall; saved by, then

	turned against, November 7th 1975 uprising. Now President.
Ziauddin, Mohammed:	Commander Dacca Brigade after Independence; joined underground Sharbohara Party in 1974.

Organizations

Awami League:	Leading party advocating secular parliamentary democracy in Pakistan and provincial autonomy for East Pakistan; won majority in 1970 elections.
BAKSAL (Bangladesh Workers League):	Mujib's new party, formed in December 1974 'Second Revolution'.
Bangladesh Nationalist Party:	General Zia's creation for 1979 elections held under martial law.
Biplopi Gono Bahini:	People's Revolutionary Army active in 7 November 1975 uprising.
Biplopi Shainik Sangstha:	Revolutionary Soldiers' Organization, radical force in Bangladesh Army.
Chattra League:	Students League (pre-1971 known as East Pakistan Students League); split in 1972 into pro-Awami and pro-J.S.D. wings.
Chattra Union:	Students Union, pro-Moscow (pre-1971 known as East Pakistan Students Union).
Communist Party of Bangladesh (Moni):	Pro-Moscow C.P. led by Moni Singh.
East Bengal Communist Party (M-L):	Split led by Mohammed Toaha from E.P.C.P. (M-L); fought in 1971 War of Liberation.
East Bengal Workers Movement (later Sharbohara Party)	Pro-Peking tendency that, unlike others, recognized paramountcy of national question; led by Sikdar after 1971.
East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist):	Pro-Peking, led by Abdul Huq and Mohammed Toaha; after independence Huq retained name 'East Pakistan'.
International Police Academy:	Washington based A.I.D. training school.
International Police Services School:	C.I.A. proprietary in Washington providing specialized courses.
Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal (J.S.D. or Jashod):	Socialist National Party formed October 1972.
Mukti Bahini:	Guerrillas of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces, 1971.
Muslim League:	Founding Party of Pakistan.
National Awami Party (Bhashani):	Front of pro-Peking groups led by Maulana Bhashani.
National Awami Party (Muzzafar):	Front of pro-Moscow Marxists led by Professor Muzzafar Ahmed.

National Security Intelligence:	Leading security service and intelligence organization of Bangladesh.
Office of Public Safety:	American A.I.D. programme training Third World police forces.
Rakkhi Bahini:	Paramilitary force set up by Mujib government.
Razakars:	Paramilitary forces of Pakistan during civil war.
Sharbohara Party:	*See* East Bengal Workers Movement.

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